



THE WALKER PAPERS



THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT NEEDS A TUNE-UP

LESSONS FOR THE US NATIONAL SECURITY
COUNCIL FROM THE BRITISH COMMITTEE
OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

CHAD T. MANSKE
COLONEL, USAF

Report Documentation Page			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>				
1. REPORT DATE MAR 2009	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2009 to 00-00-2009		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Machinery of Government Needs a Tune-Up. Lessons for the US National Security Council from the British Committee of Imperial Defence			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
			5b. GRANT NUMBER	
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
			5e. TASK NUMBER	
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air University,Air War College,Maxwell AFB,AL,36112-5962			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
14. ABSTRACT				
15. SUBJECT TERMS				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 129	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON



Brig Gen Kenneth Newton Walker

Kenneth Walker enlisted at Denver, Colorado, on 15 December 1917. He took flying training at Mather Field, California, getting his commission and wings in November 1918.

After a tour in the Philippines, he returned to Langley Field, Virginia, in February 1925 with a subsequent assignment in December 1928 to attend the Air Corps Tactical School. Retained on the faculty as a bombardment instructor, Walker became the epitome of the strategic thinkers at the school and coined the revolutionary airpower "creed of the bomber": "A well-planned, well-organized and well-flown air force attack will constitute an offensive that cannot be stopped."

Following attendance at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1933 and promotion to major, he served for three years at Hamilton Field, California, and another three years at Luke Field, Ford Island, and Wheeler Field, Hawaii. Walker returned to the United States in January 1941 as assistant chief of the Plans Division for the chief of the Air Corps in Washington, DC.

He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in July 1941 and colonel in March 1942. During this time, when he worked in the Operations Division of the War Department General Staff, he coauthored the air-campaign strategy known as Air War Plans Division—Plan 1, the plan for organizing, equipping, deploying, and employing the Army Air Forces to defeat Germany and Japan should the United States become embroiled in war. The authors completed this monumental undertaking in less than one month, just before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor—and the United States was, in fact, at war.

In June 1942, he was promoted to brigadier general and assigned by Gen George Kenney as commander of Fifth Air Force's Bomber Command. In this capacity, he repeatedly accompanied his B-24 and B-17 units on bombing missions deep into enemy-held territory. Learning firsthand about combat conditions, he developed a highly efficient technique for bombing when aircraft faced opposition by enemy fighter planes and antiaircraft fire.

General Walker was killed in action on 5 January 1943 while leading a bombing mission over Rabaul, New Britain—the hottest target in the theater. He was awarded the Medal of Honor. Its citation, in part, reads, "In the face of extremely heavy anti aircraft fire and determined opposition by enemy fighters, General Walker led an effective daylight bombing attack against shipping in the harbor at Rabaul, which resulted in direct hits on nine enemy vessels. During this action, his airplane was disabled and forced down by the attack of an overwhelming number of enemy fighters. He displayed conspicuous leadership above and beyond the call of duty involving personal valor and intrepidity at an extreme hazard to life." Walker is credited with being one of the men who built an organization that became the US Air Force.

After you have read this research report, please give us your frank opinion on the contents. All comments—large or small, complimentary or caustic—will be gratefully appreciated. Mail them to the Air Force Fellows—Spaatz Center, 325 Chenault Circle, Maxwell AFB AL 36112-6006.



**The Machinery of Government
Needs a Tune-Up**

Manske

***Lessons for the US National Security Council
from the British Committee of Imperial Defence***

Cut along dotted line

Thank you for your assistance.

AIR UNIVERSITY
CARL A. SPAATZ CENTER
FOR OFFICER EDUCATION
AIR FORCE FELLOWS



**The Machinery of Government
Needs a Tune-Up**

***Lessons for the US National Security
Council from the British Committee
of Imperial Defence***

CHAD T. MANSKE
Colonel, USAF

Walker Paper No. 15

Air University Press
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama 36112-5962

March 2009

Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center Cataloging Data

Manske, Chad T.

The machinery of government needs a tune-up : lessons for the US National Security Council from the British Committee of Imperial Defence / Chad T. Manske p. ; cm. - (Walker paper, [1555-7871] ; no. 15)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-58566-190-9

1. National Security Council (U.S.)—History. 2. Great Britain. Committee of Imperial Defence—History. 3. National Security Council (U.S.)—Evaluation. 4. Great Britain. Committee of Imperial Defence—Evaluation. 5. National security—United States. 6. Military policy—Decision making. I. Title. II. Series: Walker paper (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.) ; no. 15.

355.0335/73—dc22

Disclaimer

Opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Air University, the United States Air Force, the Department of Defense, or any other US government agency. Cleared for public release: distribution unlimited.

This Walker Paper and others in the series are available electronically at the Air University Research Web site <http://research.au.af.mil> and the AU Press Web site <http://aupress.au.af.mil>.



Air Force Fellows

Since 1958 the Air Force has assigned a small number of carefully chosen, experienced officers to serve one-year tours at distinguished civilian institutions studying national security policy and strategy. Beginning with the 1994 academic year, these programs were accorded in-residence credit as part of professional military education at senior service schools. In 2003 these fellowships assumed senior developmental education (SDE) force-development credit for eligible officers.

The SDE-level Air Force Fellows serve as visiting military ambassadors to their centers, devoting effort to expanding their colleagues' understanding of defense matters. As such, candidates for SDE-level fellowships have a broad knowledge of key Department of Defense (DOD) and Air Force issues. SDE-level fellows perform outreach by their presence and voice in sponsoring institutions. They are expected to provide advice as well as promote and explain Air Force and DOD policies, programs, and military-doctrine strategy to nationally recognized scholars, foreign dignitaries, and leading policy analysts. The Air Force Fellows also gain valuable perspectives from the exchange of ideas with these civilian leaders. SDE-level fellows are expected to apprise appropriate Air Force agencies of significant developments and emerging views on defense as well as economic and foreign policy issues within their centers. Each fellow is expected to use the unique access she or he has as grounds for research and writing on important national security issues. The SDE Air Force Fellows include the National Defense Fellows, the RAND Fellows, the National Security Fellows, and the Secretary of Defense Corporate Fellows. In addition, the Air Force Fellows program supports a post-SDE military fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

On the level of intermediate developmental education, the chief of staff approved several Air Force Fellowships focused on career broadening for Air Force majors. The Air Force Legislative

AIR FORCE FELLOWS

Fellows program was established in April 1995, with the Foreign Policy Fellowship and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency Fellowship coming under the Air Force Fellows program in 2003. In 2004 the Air Force Fellows also assumed responsibility for the National Laboratories Technologies Fellows.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
	DISCLAIMER	<i>ii</i>
	FOREWORD	<i>vii</i>
	ABOUT THE AUTHOR	<i>ix</i>
	ABSTRACT	<i>xi</i>
	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	<i>xiii</i>
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	Notes	7
2	THE BRITISH COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE	9
	Notes	29
3	THE US NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL	35
	Notes	61
4	THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST	69
	Notes	77
5	ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	79
	Notes	90
	<i>Appendix</i>	
A	National Security Council Structure	93
B	Policy Coordination Committees	95
C	President's Special Review Board National Security Advisor Performance Functions	97

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
ABBREVIATIONS	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	101

Illustrations

Figure

1 World War II Organization of the Committee of Imperial Defence	27
2 National Security Council System	44

Foreword

History can tell us a great deal about the roots of our own national security institutions. This is certainly true in the case of our modern National Security Council (NSC). In this well documented study, Air Force colonel Chad Manske traces the roots of the NSC to its organizational prototype—the British Committee of Imperial Defence (BCID). Both the NSC and the BCID were devised to address the need for greater coherence in developing and advising on the implementation of the most pressing national security and defense matters of their day. With its roots in the nineteenth century, Colonel Manske’s research reveals the BCID as an early effort precisely to bring greater coherence to the making of British security policy during its brief existence from 1904 through the end of World War II. With the dawn of a new post-war era, the United States was similarly in need of a new structure to plan for the new security environment. Within two years of the war’s conclusion, the US Congress had passed the *National Security Act of 1947* and established the National Security Council to assist in these affairs.

The historical comparison of these two institutions comprises a fascinating study of two major-power efforts to bring rational decision making to the increasingly complex domain of national security policy. By looking at the conditions that gave rise to each, Colonel Manske illuminates the conditions under which institutional innovation in security policy making takes place. By closely examining the structural similarities and differences of these institutions, and by explicating the way each conducted its business, we get a nuanced picture of how modern major powers have tackled the problem of thinking holistically about threats to national security. By comparing these institutions—their functions, purposes, leadership—and assessing how each changed over time, we gain an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of these different approaches to policy development. Colonel Manske successfully draws on comparative historical experience to make sound recommendations for strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of the National Security Council as a deliberative policy coordinating body within the Executive Office of the President. By doing so, Colonel Manske

FOREWORD

advances our understanding of how two great countries and their most important national security institutions are related, and how the United States in particular has learned a great deal from institutional innovations in the United Kingdom.

Originally submitted as a research study for Air University's Air Force Fellows Program and to Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, *The Machinery of Government Needs a Tune-Up: Lessons for the US National Security Council from the British Committee of Imperial Defence* was selected as the best of dozens of papers submitted by an Air Force Fellow for the 2008 Brig Gen Kenneth N. Walker series award.

This study is a thought-provoking, meticulously researched study that will inform and educate future US presidential administrations of the evolution of their most important national security advising entity—the National Security Council. I commend this exceptional work to anyone who wants to better comprehend the history of the NSC with an eye toward improving its effectiveness.



Beth Simmons

Clarence Dillon Professor of
International Affairs
Director,
Weatherhead Center for
International Affairs

About the Author



Col Chad T. Manske

Col Chad T. Manske was commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps at Michigan State University in June 1989, came on active duty in April 1990, and has extensive operational experience flying the KC-135, KC-10, C-17, and C-5, accumulating over 3,600 flying hours. Colonel Manske has a bachelor of social science degree in political science from Michigan State University, a master of science degree in aerospace science and management from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, a master of operational art and science degree from the Air Command and Staff College, and a master of airpower art and science degree from the US Air Force's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS). He is also a graduate of the Air War College.

Colonel Manske completed a tour as a special assistant to the Commander, United States Joint Forces Command and Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation, in Norfolk, Virginia and was the commander of the 7th Airlift Squadron and deputy commander of the 62d Operations Group, McChord AFB, Washington, and the 436th Airlift Wing vice commander at Dover AFB, Delaware. He has also deployed to Southwest Asia as an air expeditionary group commander and deputy director of the US Central Command's Deployment and Distribution Operations Center. He most recently spent a year as a National De-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

fense Fellow at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, where he wrote this paper.

Colonel Manske has published his written work, including "Looking Ahead: Future Airlift," in the *Air Force Journal of Logistics*—a required reading for Air War College students, as well as his SAASS thesis published as CADRE Paper No. 18, *Unmanned Airlift—A Viable Option for Meeting the Strategic Airlift Shortfall*. He is married to the former Stacey LoPrete, and they have three girls—Taylor, Madison, and Reilly.

Abstract

This study examines the history, likes, and differences of the US National Security Council system and its organizational prototype, the pre-World War II British Committee of Imperial Defence. To comprehend the relationship between these organizations, the following questions will be posed:

- Since the Committee of Imperial Defence was an advisory and policy coordinating mechanism that was also the organizational prototype for the NSC, what are the similarities and differences between the two and what are the substantive conclusions that can be drawn from such an examination?
- What recommendations and implications, if any, can be drawn from these conclusions with respect to the ongoing performance and function of the NSC system?

To answer the questions, corresponding assessments of each organization summarize their origins, the historical contexts leading to their creation, their organizational structures, purposes, functions, leadership, and the significant changes each experienced over time. Then, each organization is compared, contrasted, and subjectively examined, while bringing historical evidence to bear. The study concludes with insights that form the underlying bases for recommending modest changes to the NSC system. These recommendations include appropriately sizing the NSC staff and emphasizing the importance of strategic planning and others.

Acknowledgments

The idea for this research project came from an email conversation I had with Dr. Hal Winton of SAASS while I was deployed to Southwest Asia in 2007. I will never forget his insightful advice that led me to understand the truth: “It seems to me the British really figured out how to coordinate the various agencies dealing with national security much more effectively than we have. The departments appear to me to be overly bureaucratized and the NSC seems to be virtually neutered in terms of making them work together in a common cause.” Hal was an academic mentor of mine when I attended SAASS and I admired and valued his shrewd and straightforward intellect, especially his approach regarding evidence-based argumentation in academic writing. He also stressed economy in usage of the English language. His simple inspirational idea flourished into this study of generous length. I am also deeply indebted to him for offering to review drafts of this study.

Another SAASS faculty member I appreciated was Air Force colonel Peter “Huggy” Huggins. His national security expertise and inputs helped me think about my topic in ways I never imagined, opening up the possibility of future related research if I can ever find the time again.

I am also grateful for the thoughts, criticisms, and assistance in shaping this work from several other significant people. Dr. Meghan O’Sullivan—former special assistant to the president, deputy national security advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan and senior director for Iraq on the National Security Council—brought an insider perspective missing from my outsider’s vision. I am also grateful for the assistance of Air Force lieutenant colonel Jim Regenor—sitting National Security Council deputy executive secretary—who also provided an insider’s viewpoint and with whom I shared the privilege of serving with as a fellow C-17 Globemaster III squadron commander from 2002 to 2004.

Thanks also for significant feedback from Dr. John White of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. As a former US deputy secretary of defense in the mid-1990s—among other previous significant DOD appointments—Dr. White’s substantial experience in defense matters as the

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

chairman of the 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, and expertise on many other significant defense and national security reform issues was a real benefit to me. Additionally, I profited greatly from his experiences while I was a student in his National Security and Organization Management course at the Kennedy School.

I also appreciated the efforts and assistance of Dr. Amy Zegart, associate professor of public policy at the University of California, Los Angeles. Having had the opportunity to use one of her books, *Flawed by Design*, as a source for this study, I greatly valued the thorough review she gave my manuscript and the time she spent with me during an event-packed schedule to the Cambridge, Massachusetts, area. Her insights into the structure and analysis of my work, as well as the depth and breadth of her national security studies credentials, lent credible authenticity.

Another valuable mentor for this project was Dr. Dan Mortensen from the Air Force Research Institute at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Having worked with Dan in the past, I appreciated his deep understanding and experience with the rigors of writing and development of ideas. This made it easier for me to ask for his assistance again. He was a tough critic and took me to task on several aspects of this work, ultimately strengthening the final product.

Thanks also go to my Weatherhead Center for International Affairs colleagues, US Army colonel Ed Passmore, J. Nicholas Beadle of the British Ministry of Defence, and Meidyatama "Dymas" Suryodiningrat of the Indonesian *Jakarta Post* publication. Their easygoing—yet critical—examinations, wealth of knowledge, and ready availability offered me the opportunity for instant feedback.

Dr. Kathleen Molony, Fellows director for the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, was also an invaluable supporter, reviewer, and cheerleader of my work who served to make my year at the center one of the most enriching, academically satisfying, and culturally rich experiences of my life. In addition, I am grateful for the assistance of Sue Wagner, copyeditor for the Weatherhead Center, who made my prose come alive with active voice, clean transitions, and a smoothness I could never have achieved alone.

This project was made possible through the sponsorship of the US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies located at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and its director, Dr. James Smith. The institute truly enabled the academic license to fully explore this topic in a manner I saw fit.

Above all, I am thankful to God and my family. God's continual blessings on my life truly made this work possible and allowed me to "hang tough" through very long days and nights of researching, writing, and editing. To my family, I owe much. Working from sunrise until sundown, and beyond, during the short days of winter elevated the cabin fever effect, particularly when Stacey and the girls wanted my time and attention. Their understanding of why I spent so much time in my basement office writing away is immeasurably appreciated.

Chapter 1

Introduction

It will be readily seen that the British and American systems have influenced each other, America receiving far more than Great Britain, however.

—Franklyn Arthur Johnson,
Professor and Committee
of Imperial Defence researcher

Near the end of the nineteenth century, the necessity for Great Britain to defend her borders, protect her colonies, and create a coherent security mechanism to manage these functions became paramount. The necessary security mechanism, the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), would not materialize until 1904 after Britain had experienced the crucible of war not once, but twice, through the First (1880–1881) and Second (1899–1902) Boer Wars. The CID became an essential ad hoc part of the British government and empire from just after the Second Boer War until the start of World War II, and was responsible for research, planning, and policy coordination on issues of military, defense, and national strategy. After the dawn of the twentieth century, the empire, and thus the CID, would soon find itself again preparing for war. Proving itself a valuable instrument in advising and coordinating defense policies and plans leading up to and during World War I, the CID would once again repeat the cycle, making preparations for a war it would fight 20 years later. At the end of World War II, however, and having served its noble purpose for 40 years, the CID was disbanded in favor of a similarly purposed, but differently functioning Ministry of Defence. In looking back on its contributions to the entirety of the British government, the CID was crowned by one influential scholar in 1960 as “history’s most successful experiment under democratic auspices.”¹ Moreover, although this was the end of an era for one organization, another with its same paternity was soon to be created.

While the British were remaking their government structures in the aftermath of World War II, the United States was also

INTRODUCTION

considering how to do the same. Similar to the British posture and sentiments at the end of the Boer Wars, the United States also perceived the need to establish a security mechanism to manage the functions necessary in dealing with the changing world order and the nation's place in it. In searching for an organizational model to emulate, the United States naturally turned to the British and the successful CID. Deliberations on the scope, authorities, and functions of such an organization eventually were midwifed from the landmark *National Security Act of 1947*. Among other things, the *National Security Act* is best known for realigning and reorganizing the United States' armed forces, foreign policy, and intelligence apparatus. It also merged the Department of War and the Department of the Navy into the National Military Establishment headed by the secretary of defense, as well as establishing the Department of the Air Force as a separate service.

Of lesser significance at the time, the act also established the National Security Council (NSC)—a central body for providing advice and coordination for national security policy in the executive branch. Although different from the CID in many ways, the NSC adopted many of its functional attributes as a starting frame of reference—much of which has endured through the present day. As the NSC has evolved as a function of the preferences and statutory prerogatives of the US presidents, however, critics argue it has drifted away from its foundational principles—the same principles that had more or less characterized the CID's enduring existence.

These critics have a basis for their arguments. Over the last 60 years, there has been wide variance in the NSC's size, function, influence, and employment. Some of this has arguably led to unfortunate domestic and international consequences that often point back to a breakdown in the interagency coordination process—a primary responsibility of the NSC. These concerns converge in this study, leading to a focal point and the following research questions: Given that the British CID was an advisory and policy coordinating mechanism that was also the organizational prototype for the NSC, what are the similarities and differences between the two, and are there any substantive conclusions that can be drawn from such an examination? Assuming this latter question can be answered in the

affirmative, what recommendations and implications, if any, pertain to these conclusions with respect to the ongoing performance and function of the NSC system?

Method

In order to answer these questions and understand the relationship between the two organizations, this study will establish corresponding assessments of each by summarizing pertinent aspects of their origins, the historical contextual environment leading to their creation, organizational structures, purposes, functions, leadership, and significant changes each experienced over time. Next, each organization's similarities and differences are illuminated and subjectively examined, bringing historical evidence to bear. Lastly, an analysis of all the above is provided.

The study will examine the extant body of literature on the history, development, employment, and conduct of the CID and the NSC by comparing and contrasting the circumstances and attributes of their existence. These comparisons will then form the bases of analysis in determining the answers to the research questions.

Definitions

This study uses terms with respect to the NSC requiring definition. Today's NSC is statutorily comprised only of the president, who is its chairman, the vice president, the secretary of state, the secretary of the treasury, the secretary of defense, and the assistant to the president for national security affairs, otherwise known as the national security advisor (NSA). There is also a statutory military advisor—the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), and a statutory intelligence advisor—the director of national intelligence (DNI). Other cabinet members, such as the attorney general and the director of the Office of Management and Budget, are invited to participate in NSC meetings, but are not statutory members. In addition, the heads of other executive departments and agencies, as well as other senior officials, are also invited to attend meetings of the NSC when appropriate.²

The “NSC system” refers to the entire grouping of government and cabinet agencies, including the NSC and NSC staff, who produce the work and recommendations that ultimately go before the president for decision. This is often referred to as the “interagency system.”

Many use the term “NSC” in referring to the NSC staff, who are actually the group(s) of people who prepare and coordinate policy from myriad cabinet departments and agencies for deliberation by the NSC and eventual approval by the president.³ The members of the NSC staff serve at the pleasure of the president, operate with independence, and are *generally* protected by executive privilege with regard to their communications.⁴

Background and Significance of the Problem

Since a conscious effort was made by US planners to imitate a British model, and while accounting for the distinctive characteristics of the American political system, a natural curiosity emerges as to why they did so.⁵ For Britain, the CID “provided the foundation for the system of government” which differentiated the supervision of public affairs in Britain by allocating the responsibility for the defense of the empire through creation of an administrative standard for the management not only of military issues, but also of domestic and economic ones.⁶ The CID as a British national security apparatus begs the question of how the US considered adopting a version of it to suit its needs. Implausibly, a report entitled “Unification of the War and Navy Departments and Postwar Organization for National Security” submitted to the secretary of the Navy in 1945 “recommended that there be established by a statute a National Security Council to provide a permanent organization for the coordination of foreign policy and military policy in the United States.”⁷ In making this recommendation, the Eberstadt Report—named after Ferdinand Eberstadt who produced it—became a matter of US Senate record. The report devoted a considerable amount of space to explain the evolution, structure, and operation of the CID, and “how” and “why” a similar model would be beneficial to the United States.⁸

Yet through the evolution, management, and administration of the NSC system over the last 60 years, the executive branch

of government has been the cause of considerable foreign policy failures with significant domestic and international implications for America's standing in the world. Examples include the embarrassing 1961 failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion; the Vietnam War; the devastating 1987 Iran-Contra affair; the questionable, yet almost universally accepted pretext for the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 (presence of weapons of mass destruction); subsequently, the lack of planning for stability operations in Iraq; and then, responses to domestic calamities such as Hurricane Katrina. National security scholar Amy Zegart suggests that events like these have "exerted . . . direct influence on the NSC system's development,"⁹ but this author contends that not all of this development has been positive nor led to favorable policy outcomes, resulting in significant unaddressed challenges. According to scholar Paul Bracken, "most of these challenges require skills and energy from several departments working together to make any headway, yet the NSC/interagency system was never designed for that kind of integration."¹⁰

Cabinet secretaries have also commented on the lack of an effective functioning NSC system. During his farewell meeting with Pres. George W. Bush, Colin Powell, secretary of state, "told the president that the national security decision-making process—meaning, principally, the NSC process—was broken."¹¹ Former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld also commented while reflecting on more recent failures, by stating that the United States was "still functioning with an interagency process and a governmental structure that is in the industrial age in the last century."¹² Despite strong national security institutions and the great people working for them, foreign and domestic policy mistakes continue to occur, "reminding presidents of the imperatives of office and the price of failure."¹³

The international strategic context has changed considerably since the establishment of the NSC system while the system itself has not been changed.¹⁴ Critics will argue that every president has changed the NSC system. These critics argue that through various presidential decision documents and executive orders, presidents have been able to construct the kinds of NSC systems that suited their needs. While this author does not take issue with the fact that these documents and orders allow the president to shape the NSC system, these arguments

INTRODUCTION

do not hold up when the aforementioned failures and still others are considered.

Forged in the nexus between the end of World War II and the dawn of the Cold War, the NSC system has had to transition from analyzing and comprehending an environment with a single, closely watched, and relatively predictable nuclear-armed adversary, the Soviet Union, to trying to understand a more diverse and obscure environment consisting of dozens of possible enemies. These threats are much more elusive and include transnational threats, non-state actors, terrorism, rogue nations, failing states, rising near-peer competitors, complex contingency operations, and the continual worry of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—among others.

If these environmental factors are not diverse enough, consider the fact that even more diffuse, nontraditional issues like energy security, human trafficking, and ideological differences constitute the agendas of many NSC system deliberations.¹⁵ In addition, shifts in national interests and priorities between domestic and foreign policies brought on by the changes in successive presidential administrations have left the NSC system to try to cope with the load. A former NSA remarked that “every president needs some arrangement that helps him develop policy and strategy, coordinate decision making, supervise policy implementation, provide him with personal advice that keeps his own presidential perspectives and interests in mind, and articulate the policies that he is pursuing. These needs cannot be satisfied through reliance on a traditional department.”¹⁶

Unlike the world of business where changes can be made to meet customer needs and stave off the competition, large government organizations do not face life-or-death competition and lack motivation for change. Therefore, change comes hard. No one is going to buy out the government or merge it into another organization, and it cannot go bankrupt and then start over. Even worse, there is intense competition for resources between government agencies, but no agency fears institutional annihilation and the one guaranteed constant appears to be the permanent turf wars. Nevertheless, the national security environment demands the best effort from its government institutions, and this is the underlying motivation for this comparative study.

Preview of the Argument

Chapter 2 examines the origins of the CID and the historical context leading to its creation. In addition, the CID's organizational structures, purpose, functions, and the significance of its changes over the course of its existence are explored. British surprise at the alarming lack of planning and preparation before the Second Boer War, growing concern of German militarism and the threat of its domination of the European continent, as well as the necessity of securing and defending Britain's vast colonies were the major driving forces for the CID's creation. This chapter also examines CID leadership through the office of the secretariat—a key to much of CID's success over the duration of its epoch.

Chapter 3 sets out to accomplish the same purpose as in chapter 2, but for the NSC. Foundations for the NSC were laid in the aforementioned 1945 Eberstadt unification report to US Navy secretary James Forrestal, which suggested studying and imitating the British CID model. This eventually led to enacting legislation creating the presidential advisory and policy coordinating NSC.

Chapter 4 compares and contrasts both the significant and less noteworthy attributes of the CID and the NSC in order to bring to light the similarities and differences between each organization.

Chapter 5 summarizes and synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters. The analyses of the findings reveal conclusions that have implications for imparting recommendations for change.

Notes

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see appropriate entry in the Bibliography.)

1. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 366.
2. The Whitehouse, *National Security Council*. See the section entitled "Membership of the National Security Council."
3. See Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 21–23.
4. Dr. Amy B. Zegart (associate professor of public policy at the University of California, Los Angeles) interviewed by author, 17 April 2008.
5. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 366.

INTRODUCTION

6. d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 25.
7. Eberstadt, *Unification*, 55.
8. *Ibid.*, 47–50.
9. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 104.
10. Bracken, “Managing to Fail,” 73.
11. Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 502, as quoted in Ross, *Statecraft*, 121.
12. See Woodward, *State of Denial*, 379.
13. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 105.
14. See Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 61, appendix A, for a listing of the historical nomenclature of these presidential documents.
15. Although outside the scope of this study, an excellent discussion of some of these threats and challenges, how they pertain to the NSC system, and prescriptions for change can be found in Carter and White, *Keeping the Edge*, 268–71. See also Bracken, “Managing to Fail,” presenting a compelling case linking US failures in national security strategy to an interagency system that has not been structurally changed or updated to do so. He makes the analogy that in order to stay competitive in the market place, businesses must change their structure. Consequently, if our NSC system does not similarly change, it is doomed to failure. Finally, see Gerstein, *Securing America's Future*, 147–50, who asserts the only way to guarantee changes to the NSC system is through the passage of a new national security act designed to overhaul the entire government.
16. Brzezinski, “NSC's Midlife Crisis,” 94.

Chapter 2

The British Committee of Imperial Defence

A useful, indeed, an invaluable addition to our constitutional machinery.

—Lord Herbert H. Asquith
British Prime Minister,
1908–1916

As expressed by the epigraph above, the CID indeed was a very valuable organization in assisting Great Britain with her defense and security arrangements. This chapter will explore this assertion, acquainting the reader with an essential context for understanding how the CID operated, the environment it operated in, and why these mattered. From this account the reader should take away an appreciation for how the size of organizations like the twentieth century CID mattered as it related to their effectiveness, how the British system of government interrelated with the CID, and why the leadership and personalities of the CID made a difference in carrying out operations and functions. These takeaways will then serve as a prologue for understanding the American NSC system in chapter 3, thereby allowing readers to form their own conclusions about the CID and NSC.

Origins

The creation of the British CID was intended to assist the British cabinet and prime minister in a time of increasing threat to the British Empire. Its establishment was the result of a combination of startling realizations.¹ In 1885, after the Crimean (1853–1856) and First Boer Wars (1880–1881), the British formed several committees, commissions, and other bodies to examine the empire's imperial defense problems, which stemmed from a national postwar desire to reform the economy and sever the ties with their maturing colonies.² These bodies

tended to focus their efforts around two facets of the problem: reducing the cost of defending the colonies, and disposing of the constitutional relationships between Britain and her colonies.³ Of great concern, specifically, was the threat of Russian invasion along the northwest border of India. A secondary concern was Napoleon's hegemonic ambitions on the European continent and elsewhere along Britain's colonial possessions.

One such body called into creation in 1878, because of these problems, was the Colonial Defence Committee (CDC). The CDC was perhaps the most influential institution during its short existence (one year) for its nascent long-range military-planning capabilities, and was also considered the most prominent institution, despite its brief longevity, leading up to the creation of the CID.⁴ Differences, however, between the CDC and the eventual CID were considerable. The CID had:

1. a record-keeping secretariat,
2. flexible membership,
3. relationship between the service departments and other vital cabinet departments (e.g., exchequer, foreign office, colonial office, and the India office), and
4. made use of both politicians and professional service leaders as full members.⁵

The CDC had no methodical processes or ongoing means to provide the necessary information and legitimate coordination of the various cabinet departments.⁶ Neither did it have a director or head, such as its successor CID possessed via the secretariat function, to champion, filter, and focus issues for the prime minister's attention.⁷ What the CID's creation was intended to remedy, thus, was this empty space in the government and provide the cabinet a full-time body to study these and other challenges.⁸ Further complicating the situation was British concern over the threat of German militarism, Germany's bent on European continental domination, and the bitterness of British colonies (such as South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand among others) in their struggles for independence. This situation required Britain to have an organization more powerful and influential than the CDC.⁹ Because of these cir-

cumstances, the cabinet established a commission in 1890 to investigate the problem.

The Hartington Commission's report of 1890 issued recommendations to the cabinet for considering the principles of imperial defense including the need for an organization equipped to study the problem and provide advice on protecting the empire.¹⁰ The commission condemned "the inadequacy of existing interservice coordination, both in peace and in war and for both national and imperial defence."¹¹ Colonial struggles led to concern by prominent figures in the British government that, not only was the protection of the colonies becoming a struggle, but there was also speculation some, like South Africa, would invade the British mainland. In addition, the discussions continued urging "Britain to build up the machinery for planning and administering such individual operations as the defence of the British Isles, of the North-West Frontier of India, and of the several colonial ports," yet no substantive organization of significance or permanence was created.¹²

As the last decade of the century ended, Britain again found herself at war. As defeat upon defeat mounted during the Second Boer War, the national distaste over the losses and lack of preparation intensified the need for a solution.¹³ As historian Franklyn Johnson noted: "The lack of a general staff left the government with neither complete intelligent analyses, nor instructions to field commanders, nor a comprehensive plan of campaign. Most of the higher army officers grossly underestimated the Boer potentialities; an archaic and inefficient administrative system existed . . . the lack of joint planning left combat units at home to meet an imagined invasion danger while there were insufficient troops at the front."¹⁴

Therefore, at the end of the Second Boer War in 1902, the empire, still lacking planning abilities as it had from before the war, had not yet come up with a viable solution for an organization to handle such matters as recommended by the Hartington Commission. It was this failure and the recommendations of another working group known as the Esher Committee of 1904 that catalyzed the establishment and creation of the CID that same year.¹⁵

In promulgating its recommendations, the Esher Committee looked at the British army's inefficiencies and weaknesses during

the Second Boer War, further revealing how isolated Britain was—both geographically and politically—from the rest of the world. Through the Esher Committee’s findings, their report recommended sweeping changes in the administration of the British army and Britain’s military apparatus writ large.¹⁶ One of the recommendations proposed having the recently formed CID act “as the coordinating head of *all the departments concerned in the conduct of, and in the preparations for war*” (emphasis in original).¹⁷ In addition, the Esher Committee realized that existing cabinet processes in an increasingly complex industrial age, coupled with other domestic issues, left the prime minister with very little intellectual capital to think about complex defense issues, a serious weakness for the nation.¹⁸ This fully opened the door for a viable security solution—the CID.

The primary force in the CID’s creation was arguably the result of the sheer will and initiative of sitting British prime minister Arthur Balfour. Coming to power in 1902 at the end of the Second Boer War, Balfour took note of the various reports and recommendations proposing a new coordinating body. Balfour brought the CID into existence by a treasury minute dated 4 May 1904.¹⁹ Although Balfour’s tenure as prime minister and president of the CID ended with his resignation in December 1905, he carefully watched over the committee’s progress from the sidelines through periods of peace and war over the next 30 years.²⁰ In establishing the CID, Balfour envisioned a creative apparatus at the center of the government whereby specified ministers of the cabinet and other influential politicians could reform the defense establishment as well as advise, debate, and propose policy options free of the partisan organizational ties to the prime minister.²¹

To put this another way, when questions of British territorial defense arose involving the coordination of more than one government department, the CID’s job was to *advise*. In considering the larger political issues, the British cabinet then *decided*, and, once decisions were made, it was the responsibility of the various government departments to *execute*. In cases involving the dominions, including India, *decision* and *execution* responsibilities resided with their respective governments.²²

Historical Context

In order to make a fair and useful comparison between the CID and the NSC, it is vital to understand the historical contexts and respective eras in history leading up to when each was established and matured. This understanding will help parse the challenges each faced in both the formative and mature periods of their existence. The Boer Wars, as has been mentioned, provided the catalyst for the CID's eventual establishment. Nevertheless, one can only appreciate this fact through knowledge of the details. The Esher Committee's investigation into the conduct of the Second Boer War revealed divisions and failures between the political and military departments of the government and attention was eventually focused on the War Office.²³

Besides the need for defense reform that was gathering steam in the late 1800s, an external requirement for better mainland security had emerged from the outcome of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Though considered a Russian win by many historians, the 1856 Treaty of Paris had previously guaranteed Ottoman territorial integrity by Great Britain, France, and Austria.²⁴ This guarantee, in turn, required military power to assure it. The requirement for military power led directly to the formation of the CDC which had military resources and was the predecessor to the CID.²⁵ In short, the Russo-Turkish War led to the creation of the CDC, which took the British into the Boer Wars. The outcome of the Boer Wars exposed external security threats to the nation. Those threats coupled with the internal need to reform the War Office culminated in the formation of the CID from remnants of the CDC.

Once the CID was created, new defense challenges emerged as the international environment changed. As the twentieth century dawned, the world witnessed the rise in power of the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as Japan. Other changes to the balance of power on the European continent also grew evident as the decline of both France and Britain was manifested, caused to a large degree by the losses of their colonies, erratic fluctuations of their strength, and the perceived belligerence of Germany.

The conduct of warfare also changed during the early twentieth century, giving rise to unanticipated military and diplomatic consequences. No longer were small arms engagements the *primary* means of fighting between armies. Advanced weaponry and technology combined to create greater distances between combatants, depersonalizing conflict so much that military force became more than just means for states to violently engage one another—opposing forces in being became instruments of statecraft and diplomacy. Worldwide developments in science and technology gradually affected the CID and its thinking, as did concurrent shifts in political thought—both within the British government and without. Furthermore, enormous increases in the costs of national security and defense over this period served to make the CID’s role evolve in complexity.²⁶ This complexity, in turn, cultivated the fertile ground in which the various committees of the CID flourished.

Organizational Structure and Attributes

The CID’s early organizational structure was extremely flexible and varied greatly depending on the needs of the prime minister. This flexibility was perhaps the key attribute to the CID’s success, second only to the diverse selection of advisers from whom the prime minister could solicit counsel. Advising the prime minister was a nucleus of administrators and bureaucrats including cabinet ministers, military leaders, and other key officials familiar with British national security and politico-military matters. CID-provided advice exerted tremendous influence on the prime minister and the cabinet, yet was professed without specified executive authority, leaving plenty of deliberative and interpretive room to consider its worth.²⁷ Nevertheless, this arrangement seemed amenable to the prime minister, since as it was merely an advisory instrument, he and other cabinet members could reject the advice and keep their own counsel as desired.²⁸ On top of that, the prime minister was both the president and chairman of the CID and had complete discretion and authority to select its members without cabinet interference.²⁹ This design was deemed an effective planning vehicle across the government, and its expressed purpose was touted as “an example to be imitated.”³⁰ Next to the

members selected to represent the brain trust of the CID, the committees were another important advisory vehicle for the prime minister and cabinet.

Committees

One of the most noticeable features of the CID's organization was the makeup and positioning of the various permanent and ad hoc subcommittees that provided tremendous continuity and direction to the head of government. Four permanent subcommittees were established at various times after the CID was initially created. The first subcommittee was the CDC, renamed the Overseas Defence Committee in 1908.³¹ As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the CDC was the predecessor body to the CID. The CDC did not go away but became part of the CID. Under the CID, the CDC subcommittee was employed "to edit the detailed reports approved by the Committee of Imperial Defence in matters of defensive preparation over a vast range of subjects for transmission to the Dominions and Colonies."³² Other permanently established subcommittees included the Home Ports Defence Committee (1909), the Coordination Committee (1912), and the Air Committee (1912).³³ These subcommittees managed government details and edited reports from other subcommittees (particularly ad hoc subcommittees), and were comprised mainly of staff officers and other permanent officials.³⁴

These structural aspects coupled with the CID's disciplined ability to work in a bipartisan manner improved the quality of work produced and allowed the CID to garner "fairly general official acceptance" as the foremost military planning body in the British government.³⁵ The major drawback of the committee system Britain employed was its quickly growing size. At the height of its existence, the CID was comprised of 733 subcommittees under which there were 179 sub-subcommittees.³⁶ As one can imagine, these numerous committees produced a continuous flow of unending paperwork.³⁷ However, the subcommittees were organized in ways that contributed to the speed and efficiency with which the CID handled problems and ultimately to its competence and success.

Probably the most valuable of all CID permanent subcommittees was the Coordination Committee, responsible for the codification of various plans from all government departments in the event war broke out. Its plans were catalogued and contained within the famous War Book. The War Book was a significant development in its day for it contained “a thorough list of all individual responsibilities and tasks of all government departments.”³⁸ The War Book came into being in 1911 during the yearly imperial session. Under the supervision of CID secretary Maurice P. A. Hankey, 1st Baron Hankey, the War Book inevitably became a tool of inestimable worth on the eve of World War I, as it contained very detailed actions and plans required of every government department.³⁹ Never before had the government harnessed the collective power of the entirety of government and defense entities in such a comprehensive manner. The War Book even integrated the efforts of the colonies into those of the cabinet and government departments. As one scholar put it, “the C.I.D. contributed vitally to departmental administrative preparedness and inter-departmental co-ordination.”⁴⁰

Analogous to the deliberative planning process that occurs in the US defense establishment, each plan was phased with trigger points calling for action by specific players in the government. The first phase, for example, was normally called the “precautionary” or “strained relations” phase, with the War Book delegating the secretary of state for foreign affairs the responsibility for ordering the involved parties to implement this phase at a specified time when the conditions of the plan allowed.⁴¹ Next was the “war stage,” which was designated by the prime minister after which the War Office delegated implementation and execution to all government departments.⁴² “As a result of this work, the British machinery for the conduct of war had by 1914 reached an ordered completeness of detail . . . which had no parallel in the previous history of the country.”⁴³

While permanent subcommittees handled seemingly administrative and editorial details, they tended to be the continuity foundation for the entire CID. “Larger questions of policy were dealt with by committees appointed ad hoc and composed of Cabinet Ministers and officers holding the highest Service appointments.”⁴⁴ Additionally, these smaller ad hoc committees

regularly tackled “intricate problems concerned with special aspects of defence” with meticulous plans “prepared to co-ordinate the actions of the naval, military and civil departments in the event of war.”⁴⁵ When the problem or challenge was solved and the corresponding actions completed—including detailed advance planning—the ad hoc committee was simply dissolved.

As confidence grew in the CID’s abilities, many within the government came to rely on it as not only valuable, but also *essential* to the government’s security apparatus.⁴⁶ This confidence led to earning increasing volumes of work of greater complexity, which in turn demanded greater analysis and specificity from the CID, which in turn gave the CID increased experience with corresponding accolades for well done execution.

As mentioned previously, CID membership varied in size and composition depending on the problem or challenge requiring study, with a core group of the same government and defense experts attending nearly every meeting. Additional cabinet members and ranking professional officers were added to the group on an informal basis.⁴⁷ By 1910 the core members of the CID included the following: the prime minister (chairman), the secretary of state for foreign affairs, the secretary of state for war, the chancellor of the exchequer, the first lord of the admiralty, the first sea lord, the director of naval intelligence, the secretary of state for air, the chief of the general staff, and the director of military operations. Additionally, the following officials were often added depending upon the issues discussed: the secretary of state for India, the lord president of the council, the lord privy seal, the chiefs of staff of the three fighting services, the general officer commanding in the Mediterranean, the secretary of state for the colonies and dominion affairs, the inspector general of the forces, and the permanent secretary to the treasury (as head of the civil service).⁴⁸ Although these 20 regular members could rightfully assemble to discuss issues and advise the cabinet and prime minister, in reality only a half dozen or so regularly attended meetings, which convened weekly when the CID was first created. However, the number of people associated with the CID in any given year, depending on the issues discussed, could number in the hundreds.⁴⁹ A smaller number seemed to be more suitable for Prime Minister Balfour who considered himself a strategist in his own right,

capable of analyzing complex defense problems without the counsel of a large group of people.⁵⁰

It should be noted that only during wartime did the CID function more efficiently when a greater number of members were advising the government.⁵¹ By contrast, adding members during peacetime slowed the processing of advice to the executive and conveyed the stereotype of a large and slow-moving bureaucratic organization. Smaller numbers during peacetime allowed the CID to handle bureaucratic challenges well, owing much of its apparent success to the flexibility and constitution of its subcommittee structure. Lord Hankey, CID secretary for 26 years, described these workings as follows:

The detailed work is entrusted to a large number of Sub-Committees of appropriate constitution, while the Main Committee itself lays down the broad lines of policy, and acts as a sort of clamping machine and clearing house, and, if necessary, a court of appeal. The analogy that I would give you is that the Committee of Imperial Defence itself is the architect and at the same time the master-builder, engaged in directing and supervising the erection of the gigantic edifice of Imperial Defence; the actual construction and equipment of the building being entrusted to a host of sub-contractors, each of them an expert in his own particular line of business and each of them able to draw upon the most skilled labour available in the country.⁵²

Using the same analogy, Hankey emphasized that defects emerge in even the best-constructed buildings. The CID had, through its permanent coordination committee, the means and ability to discern and correct these deficiencies as they became evident.⁵³

The glue that held the CID committee machinery together was the permanent secretariat. Formed in 1904 simultaneously with the creation of the CID, the structure of the secretariat looked more like a military organization than a civilian one. Headed by a secretary appointed by the prime minister for a renewable five-year term, its core included seven assistants—two from the army, two from the navy, two from the Indian service, and one from the colonies. The secretariat's job was to guide the processes, studies, and work of the CID. Unlike other changes that were made to the composition and structure of the CID during preparation for World War I, the same exact secretariat structure and composition was retained. This pro-

vided necessary continuity of purpose and direction to the wartime version of the CID.⁵⁴

Besides having a secretariat function as a conduit of information to the prime minister and cabinet, which its predecessor organization did not have, the CID's best attributes continued to be its flexible membership and advisory status.⁵⁵ Flexible membership allowed the injection of a diversity of opinions from across, within, and even external to (in the case of private citizens) the political establishment to be circulated, commented on, and deliberated on for executive decision.⁵⁶ Further, since the chief executive was not bound to follow the advice, the prime minister and cabinet could still use the CID's insights to complement, confirm, or contrast their own thinking, hopefully leading to well-determined actions.

Another constructive attribute of the CID not resident in the CDC or previous CID-like bodies, was its ability to consider initiatives formulated *within* the CID and not just those received *from* the cabinet. This flexibility of thought and action was valuable in revealing potential imperial defense and national security blind spots, helping to keep the prime minister in a proactive, rather than reactive, mindset.

Purpose and Function

It has already been established that the CID's primary role was advising the British prime minister and cabinet on defense and security issues, but how did the CID do it? How did its structure, comprised primarily of subcommittees and a secretariat, allow it to perform its work?

Purpose

Before the CID was established, its predecessor, the CDC, was assigned the primary purpose of providing “local schemes of defence” to the Colonial Conference of 1887.⁵⁷ As a start, this entailed taking an inventory of all self-defense-related resources of both the empire and the colonies including labor and equipment and all homeland defense plans.⁵⁸ The conference then took the inventory, studied it carefully, and made necessary adjustments and alterations.⁵⁹ If any adjustments were made,

they were given to the War Office for safekeeping and modifications, as necessary. The conference and its subsequent outcomes were both significant because it was the first time the empire acted upon such a comprehensive and all-encompassing approach to defense. Previously, only offensive preparations had been organized with such detail.

The work of the CDC was not lost on the newly formed CID in 1904, as their “first great task” was “the analysis of Britain’s home defence problem.”⁶⁰ Specifically, they were tasked to study issues such as the effectiveness of sea power, protection against invasion, the defense of India and South Africa, closer military ties with the colonies, positive control of railways and ports, censorship in war, war-risk insurance, and explanations for Britain’s isolation in international affairs, among a myriad of other matters.⁶¹

How the Committee of Imperial Defence Functioned

As the CID took up its taskings, a paradox arose regarding its warrant. Since the CID was an advisory body comprised mostly of military staff, suggestions that the cabinet establish “executive bodies” like the CID to tackle specialized defense problems seemed to threaten the cabinet’s civil authority “over the units which possessed the weapons of force.”⁶² In this it is important to note the distinction between “strategic discussions” and “strategic planning.” Scholarship is in disagreement as to the actual function of the CID. One view is that the CID *only* facilitated strategic discussions, while another is that it *also* accomplished strategic planning.⁶³ This seems to indicate that the CID managed to tread a fine line between in consequence and threatening civilian control of the military. In any event, the sheer volume of plans drawn up by the CID demonstrates that it was, at once, at the foundation of strategy *and* an indispensable tool for the prime minister.⁶⁴ Strategic discussions were always held behind closed doors where experts could debate the issues. Discussions took place below the cabinet level, encouraging as honest and open a dialogue as possible without being marginalized by the complexities of cabinet-level government bureaucracy.⁶⁵ Franklyn Johnson described this method as follows:

The CID was an organ of inquiry and persuasion, a free association of the amateur and the expert. In it there now appeared to exist all the basic machinery necessary to the comprehensive planning of imperial security, making unnecessary any compartmented and secret planning by each service, while the cabinet politicians, ignorant of military matters, stood by to patch them together. It also rendered outmoded the dangerous vacuum caused by the lack of planning so general during the nineteenth century.⁶⁶

Furthermore, because of the credibility of the experts involved in the deliberations and the depth of their recommendations, nearly all (95 percent) of the affected government departments automatically implemented the recommendations.⁶⁷ In addition, at no time did it appear that the CID exceeded its authority or advisory function. The government always seemed to have full control, and thus the authority of the cabinet never seemed to diminish.

CID members and the secretariat alike were equally entitled to bring topics and issues of policy to the CID for study. "Because the C.I.D. was the Prime Minister's creature, it was to him that the Secretariat submitted its own proposals and those which came from the various departments of state. Once a subject had been placed on the agenda, it was the duty of the Secretariat or the department or departments concerned to submit papers for circulation."⁶⁸ The CID was thus effective while operating within a system where formal authority rested with cabinet ministers, and where CID members could study—apparently without pressure or prejudice—all the issues that they perceived as priorities in defense of the empire. This is remarkable considering the pressures and struggles that today's governments often channel toward short-term, reactive planning rather than long-term, deliberative planning. This ultimately guaranteed CID's worth to the ministers while demonstrating its enduring flexibility.⁶⁹

Leadership: Prime Ministers and Secretaries

Leadership within the CID, particularly exhibited by the secretary of the committee, was the primary reason for its success. The secretary provided the prime minister and defense department necessary stability, direction, and interdepartmental coordination.⁷⁰ The 1945 Eberstadt Report to Secretary of the

Navy Forrestal made note of this as well, stating that: "In its existence of over 40 years it has created a habit of working together on questions of national policy. In the achievement of this result the importance of the role of the permanent secretariat must be emphasized."⁷¹ According to Lord Hankey, the secretariat's primary role was to "ensure as far as humanly possible that the machinery for planning at all stages was functioning successfully and properly coordinated."⁷² In other words, the committee secretary was the director for the development of all plans. Previous CID-like bodies, like the CDC, lacked this secretariat function, and thus lacked a crucial element in the planning process.

Although merely having a secretariat function was clearly important to the CID's operation, selection of the committee secretary was equally important, if not more so. Since the prime minister selected this individual (and had the power to remove him without cause) without a confirmation process from the cabinet or anyone else, he had to be someone the prime minister trusted.

Due to the nature of the CID's work, its growth rate and variety, the secretary had to be a self-starter. One scholar reflected that the secretary "must be an individual of initiative and yet, if continuity were to be preserved, he must be adaptable to the personality and methods of his chiefs."⁷³ Of the handful of secretaries who led the CID, Lord Hankey served the CID longer than any other did. He deserves specific mention and consideration as the "one man who greatly contributed to . . . progress in imperial defence and who was to have lasting influence upon the C.I.D. and official policies in war and peace."⁷⁴ From 1908 to 1912, Lord Hankey served as the assistant secretary of the CID. In 1912 he became the secretary and served in the post for 26 years. His influence on the British defense establishment from the time he became secretary was such that his life and the life of the CID were practically the same.⁷⁵ Johnson best captures the character and qualities Hankey exhibited in this respect:

Lord Hankey has been described by many of the most eminent statesmen of the period, almost always in glowing terms, and I can only affirm from numerous talks with him and with those who were closely associated with him that he has emerged with the large stat-

ure with which these printed memoirs endow him. . . . Two virtues above all others seem to have motivated Hankey, a desire patriotically, constructively, anonymously and loyally to serve the state, and a conscientious thoroughness which compensated for the inattention or lack of time of others . . . he kept his viewpoint remarkably free of . . . bias. This was an indispensable attribute of a high-level secretary, and thus by his selfless service he quickly captured the confidence of seven successive Prime Ministers.⁷⁶

Johnson also noted that one of the qualities that elevated Hankey above all others was his attention to detail. Prior to his appointment to the CID, an adequate system for taking notes and minutes of meetings, record keeping, and general file storage was lacking.⁷⁷ Hankey excelled in these areas while developing and implementing organizational systems to ensure accuracy and easy record retrieval and maintaining the secrecy of sensitive discussions necessary to a functioning government. His administrative abilities greatly sped up the decision-making process for the government and alleviated the prime minister of inestimable worries. Hankey's influence would not have been possible had it not been for the full trust and confidence of the prime ministers he served.⁷⁸

In addition to having no authority, but paradoxically still possessing a reputation for getting things done, the secretary had no parliamentary following to speak of. If he were to lose the confidence or openly criticize a member of the cabinet, or take a partisan position biased in one direction or another, his influence would vanish.⁷⁹ Thus, his largest challenge, as well as his biggest constraint, lay in his ability to function within the confines of his positional authority without exceeding it. By operating within and up to the limits of his authority, Hankey was able to garner enormous credibility for, and acceptance of, the CID's work as well as strengthen his own reputation. Johnson succinctly summarizes Hankey's lasting contributions: "Hankey's tenure strengthened the C.I.D., pulled together the threads of pre-war preparations, and laid the foundations for the C.I.D.'s central place during the interwar period. He seems to be the cement of the C.I.D., equally trusted and relied upon by all, never tactless, always unruffled."⁸⁰

Noteworthy Committee of Imperial Defence Changes over Time

The first several years of the CID's existence were unremarkable, reflecting the calm of relative world peace and security. By the seventh year, however, the organization was still managing to preserve its strict advisory role to the cabinet and prime minister, while steadily accumulating the functions of an imperial consultative council.⁸¹ During these early years, the CID gradually accepted colonial representatives from outside the British government, which altered the status and make up of the body. This changed the face of the CID from one of a handful of close advisors—primarily insiders—to a larger council that had political responsibilities to entities, governments, and parliaments well outside the core British system. This, in turn, led to the introduction of a wide variety of views on matters of state for the cabinet and prime minister to consider. Many of the divergent views often ran counter to British mainland national interests. Uniformity and cooperation were sometimes at odds as the CID forged its identity and established its worth.⁸²

Also during these early years, roughly 1906 to 1911, the CID was primarily focused on domestic security disturbances as a direct result of the peacetime environment it found itself in, giving scant attention to issues beyond—such as the scares in the Balkans and rising German power. The CID developed procedures for handling both domestic security disturbances, as well as challenges abroad, through plan and policy development and the hammering out of fundamental guiding principles for imperial defense. Between 1911 and the beginning of World War I, the CID “made itself the centre of strategic planning and foreign policymaking [for] the whole Empire in relation to a possible war with Germany.”⁸³ New defense issues and challenges materialized requiring innovative security solutions, which subsequently led to the expansion of standing and ad hoc subcommittees. The plans this burgeoning group of military and civilian experts produced grew extensively, covering dozens of defense emergencies.⁸⁴ Johnson described this development as follows: “Altogether, the years from 1912 to 1914 confirmed the C.I.D., supplemented by the Imperial General Staff and the Naval Staff on the technical level, as the Empire’s central advisory

and co-ordination organ in defence and foreign policy matters. This fact was strongly emphasized with the start of the war, when the plans carefully prepared by the C.I.D. went into effect with relative smoothness and rapidity.”⁸⁵

Thus, during the early years of World War I, innovative organizations were created and adapted to deal with the new challenges and needs intrinsic to modern warfare.⁸⁶ Then prime minister, H. H. Asquith (Lord Oxford), who borrowed core members of the CID to form the new bodies and manage the requirements of the government, primarily established these new organizations. The first new organization Asquith created transformed the peacetime CID into a wartime war council. Materially, the members and functions of the war council did not differ from the CID. The chairman and the secretary were the same for both, as were the regular attendees.⁸⁷ The biggest difference between the two was that the war council was granted more executive authority—even though it was still subordinate to the cabinet—and because of the dynamic nature of the war, the council was *empowered to act* upon the decisions it made.⁸⁸ In essence, wartime events necessitated a faster decision-to-action cycle from its organizations than peacetime.

When David Lloyd George became prime minister at the end of 1916, he consolidated the defense functions of both the cabinet and the various committees into a smaller organization known as the War Cabinet. It was comprised of the prime minister and five other key ministers.⁸⁹ Occasionally, when the business merited it, the War Cabinet was enlarged to include representatives from the colonies and India. When this happened, it was dubbed the “Imperial” War Cabinet.⁹⁰ The War Cabinet had *full* decision authority, unlike any of its predecessor bodies, and was given sole responsibility for the conduct of war.⁹¹ Apart from this, though, the War Cabinet and CID functioned as one in the same, with the War Cabinet even retaining the same secretary as the CID. They had the same flexible procedures, the same close association with the chiefs of staffs of the fighting services, the same ability to call upon staff officers and outside experts, and could make full use of the extensive subcommittee system, among other things.⁹² One significant difference, however, was that the War Cabinet’s duties were increased to encompass *the entirety* of the actions of the government—including

statecraft and some diplomatic function—which persisted until the end of the war.⁹³

After World War I, the association between the War Cabinet and the CID was dissolved.⁹⁴ The War Cabinet organization was retained, however, but it was much smaller, had virtually no responsibilities, and retained no authority. The leftover majority of the organization reverted to the CID and its prewar functions.⁹⁵ New problems faced the government at the end of the war including the demobilization of fighting forces and the integration into the defense department of the now mature Royal Air Force. Complex relations with other nations after World War I now became an affair between “whole” nations, not just militaries. Since the entire nation’s might—human, economic, industrial, and material resources—was mobilized for the war effort, there was no good way to carry out the government’s business without cementing the close linkages and contributions of the various departments of state and the CID. Important to the complexity of the defense challenges Britain faced was the fact that airpower had forever taken away their relative advantage of insularity, and with it, time to deliberate upon and subsequently implement defensive preparations.⁹⁶

There were significant changes that occurred in the structure and functions of CID’s subcommittees, too. Before World War I, the subcommittees were generally delegated specific tasks normally dedicated to planning some aspect of defense and security. As mentioned earlier, four primary subcommittees existed then: Colonial Defence (later renamed Overseas), Home Ports Defence, Air, and Coordination. During the interwar period, the committee structure had grown tremendously and was meeting with such increasing frequency that by 1939 they were all organized underneath a handful of large up-echelon groups: Strategy and Planning, Organization for War, Man-Power, Supply, and Miscellaneous (figure 1).⁹⁷ The Strategy and Planning Group’s primary subcommittee was called the Chiefs of Staff Subcommittee. More than any of the other subcommittees of this or other groups, it had become the most prominent as World War II approached, eventually becoming the prototype for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁹⁸

In addition to these developments, other interwar period changes and transitions within the function of the CID are worth

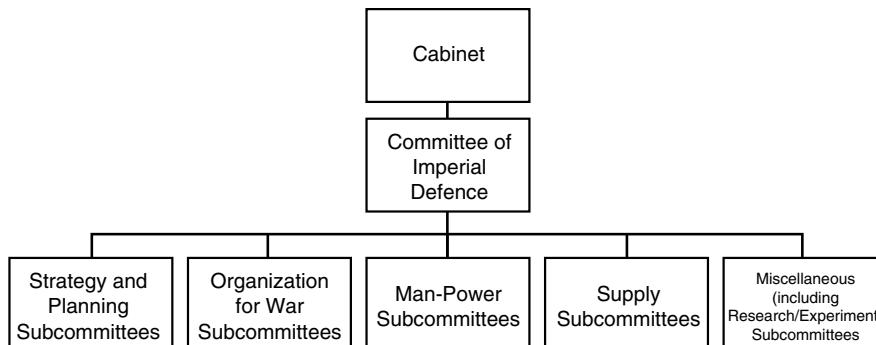


Figure 1. World War II Organization of the Committee of Imperial Defence

Adapted from F. A. Johnson, *Defence by Committee: British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885–1959*, (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 275.

noting. First, there was a continuing debate within parliament and among the public for a centralized security organization. The majority supported an organization headed by a minister of defence.⁹⁹ Before World War I this effort was of little importance. After World War I, however, it could not be ignored. As noted earlier, the complexity of problems facing Britain after World War I led many in the cabinet to debate the merits of a defence minister separate from the prime minister, as well as a military counterpart who could lead the chiefs of the fighting services, but still function as an impartial government official.¹⁰⁰

During World War II, the CID reemerged and functioned much as it did in World War I. When World War II ended, the challenges facing the nation seemed exponentially magnified compared to the aftermath of World War I. The Defence Committee (DCOM), which was significantly different in function from the CID, replaced the CID. Whereas the CID was purely an advisory body, the DCOM had certain executive authorities. The DCOM also had a smaller, fixed membership versus the flexible membership that characterized the CID. Other changes to the defense apparatus saw the replacement of the three service ministers by a single defense minister, thus creating a unified defense “voice.” With respect to these changes, scholar Henry Donaldson Jordan observed: “The real significance of the step . . . lies in its recognition of the principle of the *grouping*

of the top staff work of government by function rather than by departments [emphasis added].”¹⁰¹ The DCOM taking over the CID’s work and the changes in the world order combined to motivate the government to act. The end result, a product of the British government’s 1947 white paper, called for the establishment of a ministry of defence to replace the CID after its nearly 40 years of service.¹⁰²

During its existence, the CID filled an empty void in the British war machinery of defense thinking and planning.¹⁰³ Pacifistic attitudes and a down-turning economy just before and after World War II accelerated its demise. Johnson observed that: “The state of international relationships deteriorated so inexorably and the destructiveness of scientific warfare mounted so drastically that by 1940 defense by committee was in decline.”¹⁰⁴ As an imperial defense council and interdepartmental committee for the government’s use, the CID made tremendous contributions to the nation’s defense. Johnson’s evaluation of the conclusive merits of the CID speaks volumes: “The challenges with which the C.I.D. grappled were breathtaking in their rapid sequence and their significance to British national and imperial security. With all the weaknesses and failings which these events revealed in a nation that had long been peaceful, concerned largely with social reform and economic matters, sedentary and bourgeois in its temperament, the British in their finest hour turned in a truly striking performance.”¹⁰⁵

This shining evaluation certainly makes one wonder exactly why the CID was abandoned in favor of a ministry of defence. Perhaps as World War II ran its course, the British, instead of relying on their own established systems of policy coordinating mechanisms, adapted to the US system. The great work of the CID was that, despite its title, it looked at the concept of *security* in its broadest sense—hence treasury, foreign office, and colonial office representation in the committee. Yet when the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Air Office were consolidated into a single ministry, the need for broader coordination *did not disappear*, leaving a national security hole in the British government that until only recently was filled.¹⁰⁶ The most likely reasons the CID was subsumed and abandoned, was that the United States, through its nascent national security system, so widely represented the shared interests of both nations (Britain

and the United States) and the fact that the United States had assumed greater responsibility for UK security worldwide.

The CID's significance and role in governmental organization and efficiency, however, should not be underestimated. Indeed, even measured by today's modern standards of a contextually complex and issue-rich world, the forgotten CID stands out as an extraordinary—even revolutionary—organization. Forged by the necessities of war, it became one of the first comprehensive government organizational models ever established: “The Committee of Imperial Defence was history's most successful experiment, under democratic auspices, in harnessing land, sea and airpower to the political objectives of strategic planning, preparedness, policy formulation and war making. It was not only outstandingly successful in the United Kingdom, but the C.I.D. has been adapted to other great democracies.”¹⁰⁷

Notes

1. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 353.
2. Ibid., 16; and Johnson, “British Committee of Imperial Defence,” 234.
3. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 16–17.
4. Ibid., 16. As will be seen over the next few pages, the CDC was renamed the Overseas Defence Committee in 1908 and functioned as the first permanent subcommittee under the CID. Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 52.
5. See Johnson, “British Committee of Imperial Defence,” 235, for a full description of the distinction.
6. d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 25.
7. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 36.
8. See Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 48.
9. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 24 and 37.
10. Ibid., 32.
11. Ibid., 28.
12. Ibid., 39.
13. Also known as the South African War, this conflict was “fought from 11 October 1899 until 31 May 1902, between the British Empire and its independent six (6) colonies of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand and the two independent Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal Republic).” Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. “Second Boer War,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War; and Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 45.
14. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 40.
15. Ibid., 41; and Johnson, “British Committee of Imperial Defence,” 233.
16. Ismay, “Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence,” 242; and Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. “Esher Report,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esher_Report

.org/wiki/Esher_Report, accessed 31 January 2008. This report was the impetus for establishment of a general staff, akin to and the arguable prototype to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, in addition to sweeping organizational changes to the War Office for which the US Office of the Secretary of Defense is modeled. Here is language from the Esher Committee Report: "The British Empire is pre-eminently a great naval, Indian and Colonial Power. There are, nevertheless, no means for co-ordinating defence problems, or for dealing with them as a whole. . . . We are driven to the conclusion that no measure of War Office reform will avail, unless it is associated with provision for obtaining and co-ordinating for the use of the Cabinet all the information and the expert advice required for the shaping of national policy in war, and for determining the necessary preparations in peace. . . . The scientific study of imperial resources, the co-ordination of the ever-varying facts upon which imperial rule rests, the calculation of forces required, and the broad plans necessary to sustain the burden of Empire have, until recently, found no place in our system of government." See also Ismay, "Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence," 242; and Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 48.

17. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 139 and 307. Although executive authority is implied by this statement, it appears that in the context of the entire report it was not intended. See also Johnson, "British Committee of Imperial Defence," 239; and Hankey, "Editorial," 256.

18. Johnson, "British Committee of Imperial Defence," 233.

19. Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 45; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 84–85. Treasury Minutes in the British parliamentary system are roughly equivalent to the US Congress' system of bills or legislation in this instance.

20. Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 45.

21. See "Sir Maurice Hankey and the Origins of the Cabinet Office," Source UK.net; and d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 27.

22. Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 85; and Roskill, *Hankey*, 90.

23. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 47.

24. This treaty made the Black Sea neutral territory, thus prohibiting fortifications and the presence of armaments on its shores, as well as barring it to all warships.

25. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 17. In 1879, then British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli established the Colonial Defence Committee comprised of officials in the offices of the Admiralty, War Office, Treasury, and Colonial Office "to consider what steps could be taken at short notice to provide some measure of security for Colonial Ports," (emphasis in original). *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 3.

27. *Ibid.*, 1; Roskill, *Hankey*, 90; and Ismay, "Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence," 243. In addition to this reference, Lord Hankey gives this explanation for the role the CID plays within the government: "The Committee is not a super-department; it has no executive responsibilities; it gives no orders; it only gives advice; and in framing that advice the representatives of all the departments concerned are sure to take their share. It thus supplies

the machinery which is not only cheap, efficient, and infinitely flexible; but one which can give help to all Governments whatever their political complexion, though it cannot shelter any Minister or Government from the Parliamentary consequences of their own bad luck or bad management." Hankey, "Editorial," 273.

28. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 161.
29. Ismay, "Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence," 242; and Roskill, *Hankey*, 90.
30. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 1.
31. Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 52.
32. *Ibid.*, 53.
33. Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, appendix.
34. Hankey, "Editorial," 258; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 88; and Roskill, *Hankey*, 91.
35. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 98.
36. Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 259–60.
37. Roskill, *Hankey*, 145.
38. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 131.
39. *Ibid.*, 161.
40. Roskill, *Hankey*, 140.
41. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 132.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 49.
44. Hankey, "Editorial," 258; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 88.
45. Roskill, *Hankey*, 91; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 99.
46. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 103.
47. Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 46–47.
48. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 104; Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 98–99; and Johnson, "British Committee of Imperial Defence," 245.
49. Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 85.
50. d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 1; and Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 58.
51. Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 48.
52. Ismay, "Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence," 250.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 48 and 49.
55. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 57; and Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 49.
56. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 57–58. The Prime Minister could "call upon any department, politician, permanent official, military expert, Dominion representative or even private citizen to give him advice within the constitutional framework."
57. *Ibid.*, 19.
58. *Ibid.*, 21 and 23.
59. *Ibid.*, 21.
60. *Ibid.*, 58.

61. Ibid., 77; Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 86–87; Johnson, “British Committee of Imperial Defence,” 236; and d’Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 5. Johnson provides examples of the international affairs isolation including the Entente Cordiale (which was a series of agreements signed in 1904 between the United Kingdom and France regarding a more peaceful coexistence) and the alliance with Japan. Further examples of the wide range of subjects the CID closely studied demonstrate the usefulness, flexibility, and broad influence the CID had on the Cabinet and prime minister, including control of the press, insurance for shipping goods, espionage, and the long-range development of air power. See also Roskill, *Hankey*, 140; and d’Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 21.

62. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 75; and Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 49. As historian Franklyn Johnson relates, “The politicians . . . had only recently won their long campaign to remove even the tenuous threads of royal influence over the army. This was in addition to their long success in financially starving the services, especially the army. Their concern had been primarily the control over, not the efficiency of, the armed forces, and now this control rested in name, as well as in fact, [with] the cabinet. Political leaders . . . were in no mood to allow any aspects of this power to pass to another body, and [Prime Minister] Balfour was one of the strongest defenders of the tradition of cabinet responsibility.”

63. Roskill, *Hankey*, 138. Roskill contends that Franklyn Johnson’s characterization of the CID as the “Centre of Strategic Planning: 1906–1911,” a separate chapter in his 1960 work *Defence by Committee*, did not have the benefit of private and official records publicly released after 1960 that indicate differently. He further states rather unequivocally on page 140 that, “the simple truth is that up to 1914, and indeed for some years after the outbreak of war . . . the C.I.D. neither directed strategy nor possessed any measure of control over the Admiralty and War Office.” Yet a third scholar, d’Ombrain in his 1973 work entitled *War Machinery and High Policy*, noted that the CID “achieved a remarkable measure of progress towards its development as an organ for centralizing defence policy-making and planning” (emphasis added). d’Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 73.

64. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 72.

65. Ibid., 81.

66. Ibid.

67. Ismay, “Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence,” 243. Lord Hankey uses an excellent example of how this process worked: “Let us suppose that the situation demands the dispatch of military forces . . . to some threatened point abroad. In that event the Committee of Imperial Defence considered all the factors which have a bearing on the problem—political, military, economic and so forth. Having reached agreement, it puts forward recommendations to the Cabinet as to the precise naval, military, and air forces which should be sent, the dates on which they should start, the route by which they should go, the action that they should take on arrival, the diplomatic action that should be taken in parallel, and so forth.”

68. d’Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 138.

69. Catterall, "How Imperial was the Committee of Imperial Defence?"

70. d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 164.

71. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 50.

72. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 73.

73. *Ibid.*, 74.

74. *Ibid.*, 126–27.

75. *Ibid.*, 127 and 261. Lord Hankey's service to the British government, the CID, and its various committees is extensive. Here is an overview of the many positions he held: naval assistant secretary of the CID, 1908–1912; secretary, 1912–1938; secretary of the War Cabinet, 1916–1919; secretary of the Cabinet, 1919–1938; clerk of the Privy Council, 1923–1938; secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and innumerable other subgroups of the cabinet and CID; War Cabinet minister without portfolio, 1939–1940; chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1940–1941; paymaster general, 1941–1942; chairman of the Scientific Advisory and Engineering Advisory Committees, 1942–1943. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 127, note 12.

76. *Ibid.*, 127.

77. Roskill, *Hankey*, 91. Roskill further describes Hankey's administrative acumen: "Minutes of each meeting, stating clearly and concisely the conclusions reached, were produced and circulated within 24 hours, and were numbered consecutively from the first meeting held on 18th December 1902 to the day when the Defence Committee of World War II took over its functions."

78. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 128. Johnson further notes that "Hankey's precision, his efficiency, his thoroughness, his administrative ability, his obsession to get the job done speedily and yet accurately, which was strangely refreshing amid the usual slipshod ways of doing business in government." *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, 129–30.

81. *Ibid.*, 109.

82. *Ibid.*, 111.

83. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 120.

84. *Ibid.*, 121.

85. *Ibid.*, 161.

86. Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 92. More exactly, from November 1914 through December 1916. Hankey, "Editorial," 262.

87. Hankey, "Editorial," 262; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 93.

88. Hankey, "Editorial," 262; and Roskill, *Hankey*, 92. Within a few months after the name change to the War Council, lasting from November 1914 to June 1915. The name was changed to the Dardanelles Committee, June to October 1915, then again changed to the War Committee, formed in November 1915, where it remained through November 1916. These three iterations "were an adaptation to the circumstances of the war of the elastic machinery devised by Lord Balfour in 1904." Hankey, "Editorial," 263.

89. Hankey, "Editorial," 263; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 94.

90. Hankey, "Editorial," 264.

THE BRITISH COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

91. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 49–50; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 94.
92. Hankey, “Editorial,” 263; Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 95; and Ismay, “Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence,” 244. By the end of the war, over 200 subcommittees existed.
93. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 49.
94. This occurred in November 1919 after the Peace Conference. Hankey, “Editorial,” 264; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 96.
95. Hankey, “Editorial,” 264.
96. Ismay, “Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence,” 245.
97. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 253. In 1933 the total number of personnel working for the CID was 405. Between 1935 and 1936, that number jumped to 532 and by 1938, the number increased more to more than 876.
98. Ibid., 242–43.
99. Ibid., 167.
100. Jordan, “Foreign Government and Politics,” 78.
101. Ibid., 81. According to this scholar, the name change to Defense Committee is because it was given executive powers. This arrangement, covered in chapter 2, would be similar to the efforts in the United States whereby the *National Security Act of 1947* would legislate defense unification.
102. Johnson, “British Committee of Imperial Defence,” 251.
103. Ibid., 354.
104. Ibid., 256–57.
105. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 362.
106. Interview with J. Nicholas Beadle, former private secretary to British Ministry of Defence secretary Des Browne, interview by the author, 28 March 2008. Beadle noted that Britain has come full circle in some respects by establishing a new Cabinet Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development on 23 July 2007. Designed to “consider issues relating to national security, and the government’s international, European and international development policies,” the committee brings together ministers from across the British government. This committee, however, does not function the same as the CID or the NSC, but nonetheless reflects the established protocol of “collective Cabinet responsibility.”
107. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 366.

Chapter 3

The US National Security Council

In form and in public imagery, the National Security Council is the most exalted committee in the federal government.

—I. M. “Mac” Destler
NSC and foreign policy
scholar and researcher

Key takeaways and questions in this chapter are primarily fourfold. First, what similarities existed between the CID and NSC? How did one organization operate versus the other and why does that matter? Second, what has happened over the course of the NSC’s existence when the size of the NSC staff varies and what is significant about that? Third, what do the US foreign policy and international engagement successes and failures of the past resulting from NSC involvement suggest as a contribution to presidential decision making? What kind of accountability should the NSC have to the Congress or to the American people, if any? And lastly, what are the similarities and differences between the British CID and US NSC that could show the reader how the NSC system might be made stronger?

Origins

When outlining the origins of the NSC, one would think the framers had resolved to create a body to oversee the whole of US national security. In fact, that is not entirely true.¹ Evidence suggests that the NSC’s roots stem back to World War I or before; most accounts, however, place the origin closer to the end of World War II. What is certain is the fact that several attempts were made throughout the last century to synchronize the management of the myriad of government and defense departments to provide for a more unified and coordinated national security and defense structure. These attempts often failed, as many proposals were perceived as conveying power and pre-eminence to one department over another.² Between 1921 and

1945 alone, 50 bills were introduced to Congress to make these kinds of changes in the executive branch, yet none were successfully enacted into law.³ In the fall of 1945, it was found that “a survey of the relationship between foreign policy and military policy in the United States reveal[ed] that there [was] a serious lack of coordination between these two categories of governmental and national activity.”⁴ Despite these shortcomings in the 1940s, concerted efforts for enhancing defense and national security coordination gathered energy.

In December 1944 the issue of postwar German occupation surfaced. The State–War–Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) was eventually established in 1946 to deal with this exigency.⁵ In 1947 the SWNCC was renamed the State–Army–Navy–Air Force Coordinating Committee (SANACC) and was comprised of officials at the assistant secretary level on down. Later that year and as a direct result of the Eberstadt report, the SANACC was essentially remade into its organizational successor, the NSC, after the passage of the *National Security Act of 1947*.⁶ How did this come about?

In 1945 Eberstadt forwarded a report to his friend and boss, then secretary of the Navy Forrestal, at his request regarding the unification of the armed forces.⁷ This report contained recommendations for creating a handful of statutory agencies and national security bodies to enhance and facilitate governmental policy coordination. Eventually, these recommendations were refined, forming the bases for the *National Security Act of 1947* two years later. Scholar Richard Best described the NSC as an inconspicuous by-product of the larger *National Security Act*. “It is difficult,” he wrote, “to isolate the creation of the NSC . . . especially as the NSC was much less controversial than the unification of the military and so attracted less attention.”⁸ The real question should be, in view of the fact that he was the Navy secretary, did Forrestal request the report in the first place?

First, Forrestal wanted to find a legal way to circumvent and avoid what he perceived in Pres. Franklin Roosevelt’s wartime conduct as his “highly personalized, ad hoc decision making during World War II, above and around his principal formal advisers” (emphasis in original),⁹ as well as to promulgate a strategy “by the Navy to retain its preeminent position among the military services.”¹⁰ In addition, Forrestal was looking for

an American version of the British CID and saw in the idea of an NSC a means to curb the authority of his boss, Pres. Harry S. Truman, in whom he had limited confidence.¹¹ Ironically, President Truman supported some kind of national security apparatus, if nothing else than to put in place structures to ensure that surprise attacks such as those on Pearl Harbor never occurred again.¹²

At the time of its creation, the NSC was nearly overlooked as just a small organization in the larger government bureaucratic hierarchy. The organization and its staff were considered merely pawns in the mind of the president. To Eberstadt, however, the NSC was designed for much more. To him it was “to be a strong, independent, collaborative institution,” and he had ultimately hoped that this kind of a coordination system “would better conform to American democratic ideals, would protect civilian control of the military, and would prevent domination by one military service—all . . . while improving cooperation between the services and integrating US military and foreign policies.”¹³ But President Truman envisioned the circumstances differently.

In a special address to Congress on 19 December 1945, President Truman snubbed the idea of an NSC by not even making mention of it but explicitly calling for enacting legislation to “protect American interests and reinforce American influence in the postwar world” (emphasis added).¹⁴ Within two years, this legislation would be enacted in the form of the *National Security Act of 1947*. According to former national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the timing of the president’s address was no accident since the US role in the postwar world was already assured: “American decision makers were conscious that the direction of the war effort in World War II had been improvised and involved a number of ad hoc arrangements for decision making. Key military and political decisions often had been made on the basis of personal arrangements informally structured and responsive to specific circumstances. The *National Security Act* of July 26, 1947, provided more formal machinery to deal with America’s involvement in global realities over a longer term.”¹⁵ Ultimately, when the *National Security Act* was passed, Forrestal got his NSC, but with the president approving its creation and deciding its role: “Instead

of a central policy-making body to institutionalize the Navy's power, the National Security Council became a purely advisory council . . . without policy making authority [and] without express statutory powers.”¹⁶

Historical Context

In 1916, during World War I, a proposal for a defense council was put forth as a way to manage efforts for improving the co-ordination of national defense and security. According to the Eberstadt report, the defense council was proposed by statute (Army Appropriation Act of 1916) as an organization:

to guide the mobilization of the national resources. This was to be an advisory council consisting of the Secretaries of War, Navy, Interior, Labor, Agriculture, and Commerce, with responsibility for coordinating industry and the national resources for national security. The functions of the Council were in fact to be discharged by an Advisory Commission of experts . . . The responsibilities of the Council [would be] limited to the mobilization of the national economy. The Council [would do] nothing to centralize the responsibility for military policy and foreign policy.¹⁷

Pres. Woodrow Wilson's administration, however, was disinclined to establish measures perceived to favor increasing military influence in formulating national policy.¹⁸ The statute also permitted the president to appoint an advisory commission of selected specialists to aid the council.¹⁹ Ultimately, no significant structural changes to the departments were made, and the council was disbanded in 1921.²⁰

Before and during World War II, officials within the US government were discussing ways and means to correlate domestic and foreign policy with military and economic means. In 1940 then secretary of war Henry Stimson and secretary of the Navy Frank Knox met regularly with secretary of state Cordell Hull in a meeting forum referred to as a “war council.” President Roosevelt convened a similarly named and functioning body during the same period consisting of the secretaries of state, war, the Navy, the chief of staff of the Army, the chief of naval operations, and the chief of the Army Air Corps to discuss national strategy.²¹ During the war, as fighting intensified around the world, these correlations grew stronger, and it became evident that fighting alone was not going to defeat enemy forces. In fact several studies and plans were completed within

US defense circles in which defeating an enemy's economic strength—Germany's ball bearing industry, for example—was the key to collapse. As the war came to a close and questions about the occupation arose, economic rebuilding plans and new political structures for the defeated nations became major challenges to surmount and solve. Many looked to the United States for solutions as these events “sharpened the need for the creation of a mechanism to enable the Executive Branch to act quickly and judiciously in the face of problems involving our security and cutting across practically all fields of governmental responsibility.”²² The establishment of the State–War–Navy Coordinating Committee in 1944, and its successor State–Army–Navy–Air Force Coordinating Committee, as discussed earlier in the chapter, was a springboard to *National Security Act* legislation and was the first solution to the apparent weaknesses in US national decision-making capacity.²³

Nevertheless, even before the *National Security Act of 1947* was passed, Cold War tensions were beginning to build between the Soviet Union and the United States, hastening the need for a national security apparatus to harness, organize, and employ all the instruments of power. In addition, political scientist and scholar Carnes Lord noted that “[as] defense unification gained momentum from the example of superior British coordination of its military establishment during the war itself, . . . the establishment of the NSC reflect[ed] widespread dissatisfaction with the wartime leadership style of Franklin D. Roosevelt and a commitment to more orderly and disciplined decision making at the national level.” With regard to the Soviet threat, Lord further emphasized that, “the NSC apparatus . . . clearly bore much of the burden of developing and executing American policy as the confrontation with the Soviets hardened.”²⁴

After 1947, when the Cold War was in full bloom, national security policy began to grow in complexity. The constant enforcement of containment doctrine and nuclear deterrence depended in part on the assistance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance. Yet the United States’ serious adversaries, for the most part, were limited to communist nations, making policy formulation simple by today’s measures. Further simplifying the equation, but not making the problem easier to comprehend, was the fact that strategic thinking and

theory entailed an acute understanding of the relationships between conventional and nuclear forces.

By comparison, today's national security structures must deal with a strategic environment with far more convoluted issues across a wider scale, including terrorism, homeland defense, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as nontraditional threats like energy security, climate change, and transnational crime.

Organization and Structure

When the *National Security Act of 1947* was passed, little attention was paid to the structure of the NSC. The act established the council's composition: the president, vice president, secretary of state, secretary of defense, chairman of the National Security Resources Board, the secretaries and under-secretaries of other executive departments and of the military departments, the chairman of the Munitions Board, and the chairman of the Research and Development Board "when appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to serve at his pleasure."²⁵ Within 10 short years of the act's passing, during Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration, this list of statutory members would shrink to only the first four on this list plus the director of the Office of Defense Mobilization.²⁶ By way of comparison, the NSC in 2007 included only the top four as statutory advisors plus three others as nonstatutory members including the CJCS (military advisor), the DNI (intelligence advisor), and the NSA.²⁷

Several provisions set forth seem to echo the British experience. One of those provisions called for an organization "to provide for the establishment of integrated policies and procedures for the departments, agencies, and functions of the government relating to the national security."²⁸ Another provision called for the formation of a staff to support the organization to be headed by an executive secretary appointed by the president.

The National Security Council Staff

The language describing the executive secretary's role in the NSC is interesting. As mentioned above, this position was to be

filled by the president with an intention to use this person as an “anonymous servant of the Council” to coordinate the exchange of ideas and recommendations from across the government departments.²⁹ Scholar Amy Zegart contends that the wording in the statute calling for an executive “secretary” is significant, in that other positions specified in the act were “chairmen and directors of new organizations,” connoting a “lower” position for the secretary. She further explains that the term secretary in 1947 was used to describe “a professional bureaucrat in the *neutral competence tradition*” (emphasis added).³⁰ The first executive secretary, Sidney W. Souers, characterized his roles and responsibilities: “His proper functions demand that he be a non-political confidant of the President, and willing to subordinate his personal views on policy to his task of coordinating the views of responsible officials. As a staff assistant to the President, he maintains the President’s files on Council business and briefs him daily of the progress of work in hand.”³¹

Of course, we know this description today applies to the person officially known as the assistant to the president for national security affairs, or more commonly, the NSA. The executive secretary position was retained, though, with a change in his role to heading the career staff of the NSC.³² Rather than being anonymous, the NSA enjoys cabinet-level standing despite not having to face Senate confirmation.³³ Unlike the executive secretary, the NSA’s role was not established in the *National Security Act of 1947*, nor has it since been defined by legislation.³⁴ Despite this, the NSA is considered to be a peer of the other statutory members when the NSC meets, essentially chairing the meetings and serving as the president’s go-to expert for routine national security issues.³⁵

While the *National Security Act of 1947* established the foundation for a small, purely administrative staff to assist the executive secretary in coordinating advice for the president’s consideration, it did not specifically constrain its size. In particular, the legislation called for the staff “to perform such duties as may be prescribed by the Council in connection with the performance of its functions.”³⁶ The act, however, does not “direct or require the [president] to take counsel with particular advisers in reaching decisions,” and allows the president to come to his own conclusions on issues (appendix A contains the NSC

organizational structure as of September 2006).³⁷ Though it appears large and complex today, it was not always so.³⁸ The modern NSC staff has had as many as 200 members or more, with responsibilities varying in importance from the most senior policy analysts to the most junior support staffers.³⁹ Over the course of its existence, the NSC's size, composition, and most importantly, its influence has been dependent upon the president.⁴⁰ Today's NSC staff works for the NSA, however.⁴¹

Committees

A hierarchy of committees comprises the structure under which the NSC staff is organized. The modern system of committees was created in the administration of George H. W. Bush and has remained mostly intact since. The most senior group contained therein is the Principals Committee (PC) that "acts as the President's senior level policy review and coordination group."⁴² It looks very similar to the statutory NSC composition itself only without the president and vice president. It is comprised of the secretaries of state, defense, and treasury, as well as the CJCS, DNI, and NSA. Different presidents have used this committee in distinctive ways depending on personal style and preferences. Among other functions, it has primarily been used to "discuss current and developing national security issues, review and coordinate policy recommendations developed by subordinate interagency groups and affected departments and agencies, and give direction for implementation or follow-up analyses." Its primary task, however, is to bring consensus positions from within the executive branch departments and agencies regarding policy decisions to the president. Other key subject-matter advisers may be called upon to attend a PC meeting to bring expertise and clarity to the issues being discussed. Examples include the secretary of the Department for Homeland Security, White House chief of staff, and the vice president's own NSA.⁴³

The next structure below the PC is the Deputies Committee (DEPC). Its regular composition includes up to 13 deputies spanning the breadth of the executive branch and is responsible "for directing the work of interagency working groups and ensuring that issues brought before the PC or the NSC have been

properly analyzed and prepared for high-level deliberation.” Traditionally, the DEPC is where the majority of the policy formulations and discussions are thoroughly debated before the PC reviews them, and before their appearance in front of the president for decision.⁴⁴

Underneath the DEPC are various interagency working groups collectively known as policy coordination committees (PCC). The PCCs are comprised of subject-matter experts and senior officials of the departments represented in the DEPC. As time has passed since the modern committee system was established, control of policy issues has centered within the PC and DEPC. The PCCs, however, were historically the “primary forum for interagency coordination.”⁴⁵ As one might imagine within a bureaucracy, the PCCs undertake the lion’s share of the planning and coordination that flows *up* to the DEPC and beyond, while guidance flows *down* to them in a like manner.

The PCCs normally meet weekly, but sometimes daily in a crisis, and are organized both functionally and regionally (see appendix B for a complete listing of the PCCs extant as of 2007).⁴⁶ The Bush administration has at times added other interagency groups to the PCCs on short-term bases for activities requiring dedicated policy planning and staff work that do not fall into the functional categories of the existing PCCs.⁴⁷ See figure 2 below depicting the relationship between the various committees of the NSC system.

Purpose and Function

The purpose of the NSC is spelled out explicitly in the *National Security Act of 1947*, Section 101 of Title 1:

- a. The function of the Council shall be to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security.
- b. In addition to performing such other functions as the President may direct, for the purpose of more effectively coordinating the policies and functions of the departments

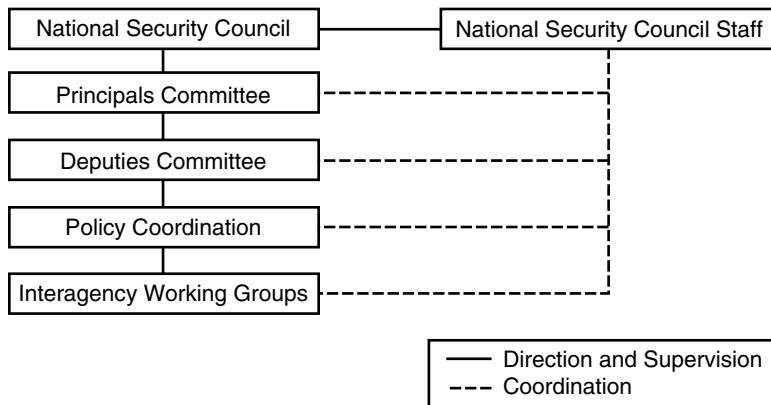


Figure 2. National Security Council System

and agencies of the Government relating to the national security, it shall, subject to the direction of the President, be the duty of the Council:

1. To assess and appraise the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States in relation to our actual and potential military power, in the interest of national security, for the purpose of making recommendations to the President in connection therewith; and
2. To consider policies on matters of common interest to the departments and agencies of the Government concerned with the national security, and to make recommendations to the President in connection therewith. . . .
- d. The Council shall, from time to time, make such recommendations, and such other reports to the President as it deems appropriate or as the President may require.⁴⁸

Given this stated purpose, wide latitude is conferred on the president in seeking advice and coordinated policy options from anyone in his cabinet or the NSC staff, and this actually is a frequent occurrence. Although the entire cabinet is concerned with national security, the restricted composition and attendance by the NSC allows the president to synthesize the diverse views from the wider body of available experts and focus at a

high level on the most important aspects of his responsibilities.⁴⁹ It also facilitates the opportunity for transparent and candid discussion.

The wording of the *National Security Act* implies that the constitutional right of the president be preserved and that the cabinet and NSC staff members' authority to coordinate policy is delegated to them by the president. Also important to note is that the NSC staff has no explicit responsibility to implement policies that result from presidential decisions—those are the responsibilities of the affected departments.⁵⁰ In order to ensure that presidential policies are being followed, however, it behooves the NSC staff to at least *monitor* policy implementation for the president.

In the first few years of the NSC's existence when the staff was small and had minimal influence, policy papers requiring presidential decision were originated within the policy planning staff of the State Department. Often, the secretary of state would approve these papers before they went to the NSC. They were then analyzed and prepared for deliberation at the next NSC meeting.⁵¹ Because President Truman was skeptical of the NSC, since it was more or less foisted upon him, he intentionally stayed away from the early sessions, only attending a dozen of the first 57.

By the time President Eisenhower became comfortable with the NSC—around 1956—his NSA, Robert Cutler had transitioned the policy origination process from the Department of State to what became known as the NSC Planning Board (a committee of departmental assistant secretaries) within the NSC staff. The importance of the Planning Board cannot be understated. At one NSC meeting early in his administration, President Eisenhower remarked on its importance as a tool of the NSC to do all the thinking and planning, with undivided attention, for which the NSC members themselves had little time.⁵² Scholars Fred Greenstein and Richard Immerman explain some of the board's workings:

The Planning Board was charged . . . with flushing out the policy views of each of the NSC's member bodies on major national security issues. The Board subjected those positions to what Cutler called an "acid bath," sharply delineating them and identifying and specifying points of disagreement. The board was strictly instructed not to water down disagreements or cover them up. Instead, "policy splits" were to be spelled

out . . . so that they might be debated in the NSC and resolved by the President. Before the documents hammered out by the Planning Board were discussed by the NSC, the board members briefed their chiefs on them, explaining their own positions and reviewing the splits. . . . The superiors of the Planning Board members were not obliged to support the policy recommendations of their department's representatives on the board. Instead, Eisenhower instructed everyone involved in the national security process to view [themselves] as a general presidential adviser rather than a departmental delegate. The Planning Board was the engine of the Eisenhower national security process.⁵³

The changes Eisenhower instituted represented a major shift in the organizational dynamic and influence of the NSC, as it was now presiding "over the development of papers that analyzed virtually every significant US foreign policy problem and proposed, on each, a general 'policy' for Council review and Presidential approval."⁵⁴

By contrast, in today's NSC, the president and cabinet members, led by the NSA, discuss policy options for presidential decision while the executive secretary and the NSC staff ensure the right policy papers get to the right people at the right time.⁵⁵ Once the president decides on a course of action, the other members of the NSC take those decisions back to their departments or agencies for implementation and execution.

Leadership: Presidents and National Security Advisors

The flexibility incorporated into the NSC system has allowed every president who has used it the unfettered ability to shape, staff, and employ it to suit his personal style of leadership and management. In practice, presidents have varied its use widely. Some presidents preferred vigorous debate in the NSC, while others favored consensus and affirmation of their predetermined decisions. Serving the president well meant not only presenting one's own views and advice, but also fairly representing the views of others down stream of the process and telling the president candidly of disagreement with his pending decisions.⁵⁶ According to scholar Charles A. Stevenson "time constraints limit the number of matters brought to the attention of senior policymakers. . . . In such real-life circumstances, it can be difficult for presidents to maintain close control over

important policy matters.⁵⁷ Constraints on the president's time have also affected the way in which he employs the "formal" NSC. "Formal meetings of the National Security Council have tended to be rare . . . because Presidents did not see a need to hold 'official' NSC meetings versus other, more informal consultations."⁵⁸ Conducting national security affairs in this manner could lead to distrust among the other members of the NSC who are not present, and they may feel slighted by being unable to participate in the statutory policy-making process. Furthermore, since records of these sessions might not be kept, they easily could be subject to misinterpretation and conjecture, let alone forgotten or not followed through with.⁵⁹

Presidential Use of the National Security Council

As already discussed, the *National Security Act* was designed so that the NSC and staff could provide advice to the president to inform his decision making. President Truman was particularly sensitive to this aspect of the NSC function and was opposed to any organization within the executive branch that might hold any national-security-policy decision-making power.⁶⁰ Unlike President Truman, President Eisenhower expected the NSC members to "seek, with their background and experience, the most statesmanlike answer to the problems of national security, rather than to attempt solutions which represent a mere compromise of agency positions."⁶¹ He significantly and positively changed the NSC into a breeding ground for spirited discussions and diverse views, against a backdrop of thoughtfully prepared and detailed issue papers. According to Cutler, the president sought differences and liked "nothing better than the flashing interchange of views among his principal advisers."⁶²

In March 1953, shortly after taking office, Eisenhower quickly moved to institutionalize the NSC, creating the position of special assistant to the president for national security affairs and establishing an elaborate structure of committees. Eisenhower was also probably the most procedurally formal president in the early years of the NSC. Being accustomed to hierarchical staff structures his entire military career, it is understandable why Eisenhower managed his staff in this manner. This for-

mality led to deference, particularly from his executive secretary Robert Cutler, possibly inhibiting Cutler from fully expressing his views.

Interactive relationship styles differed widely between presidents and their NSAs. In contrast to Cutler's deference to President Eisenhower's managerial style and council leadership, Pres. Richard Nixon more or less deferred completely to the personality of his NSA—Henry Kissinger—to take the lead on policy formulation. Whereas, Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson preferred a very collegial and informal approach to policy formulation.⁶³ Through Kissinger's aggressive leadership style and managerial dominance, his name and actions became synonymous with the NSC staff itself.⁶⁴ Also interesting is the fact that Nixon coined the term “national security adviser” in his 1969 presidential inauguration speech.⁶⁵

Many presidents, in addition to President Nixon, also eschewed Eisenhower's formal approach. Unlike Eisenhower, Presidents Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson often received counsel from outside the formal structure of the NSC system, but from close advisers, nonetheless. This in part explains why the formal NSC rarely met under each of these presidents. In fact, the formal NSC has not met on a regular, prolonged basis since President Eisenhower's era, with the exception of Pres. George W. Bush.⁶⁶ Most presidents have preferred informal meetings with pertinent cabinet members present to receive advice, information, and analysis. President Kennedy is probably best known for his informal meeting style, often using informal groups and other arrangements to get assistance and opinions. He found that the formal process lacked creativity and was ineffective.⁶⁷ Other examples of how presidents met informally outside the structured NSC include President Johnson's Tuesday lunches and Pres. Jimmy Carter's Friday breakfasts.

Presidential National Security Council Models

President Carter's NSA, Zbigniew Brzezinski, identified two distinct NSC models of presidential leadership—a presidential system and a secretarial system.⁶⁸ Brzezinski noted that the chief executive involved himself intimately with the details of national security policy in the presidential system. In the sec-

retarial system, presidents have maintained control of the highest responsibilities in decision making, but have consciously withdrawn from close policy supervision. He further noted that, although no president through 1980 fell *neatly* into one category or the other. Presidents Kennedy, Nixon, and Carter tended toward the presidential approach while Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, and Gerald Ford assumed more of a secretarial approach. Furthermore, through the presidential approach, he observed that no president allowed any high-ranking cabinet member, such as the secretaries of state or defense, to play a principal role in formulating policy (though the NSA's role was somewhat elevated). But through the secretarial system, presidents tended to permit the secretary of state (not the NSA) to take the leading role in shaping foreign policy. Regarding this last point, Carter publicly stated several times that his secretary of state was his primary national security representative. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Brzezinski concluded that no significant lessons could be drawn in favor of one model or the other.⁶⁹

Role of the National Security Advisor

NSA's have enjoyed a variance of conveyed presidential status depending on the preferences of the presidency in which they worked. Scholars Karl Inderfurth and Loch Johnson outlined their view of what the roles of the NSA should be: "It is [their] responsibility to ensure that matters submitted for consideration by the Council over the full range of issues on which review is required; that those issues are fully analyzed; that a full range of options is considered; that the prospects and risks of each are examined; that all relevant intelligence and other information is available to the principals; that legal considerations are addressed; that difficulties in implementation are confronted."⁷⁰

The first NSA, Robert Cutler, was a banker before meeting Eisenhower, and had also worked on his campaign staff, so he was relatively familiar with workings at the White House. President Eisenhower quickly put him in charge of the NSC Planning Board, ensuring that presidential views would be heard in the earliest stages of the NSC policy process.⁷¹

Perhaps the best-known NSAs, because of their forceful roles in going beyond mere policy coordination and into the policy formulation realm, are Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, under Presidents Nixon and Carter, respectively. Each served as powerful policy representatives such that many would argue—on good grounds—that they stepped over the line of the intent of the *National Security Act* as policy coordinators, and into the policymaking realm. Zegart concluded that, although their systems were not identical, they had much in common as they and their staffs “dominated the foreign policy process to a degree unmatched by any NSC staff before or since. In both administrations, major issues were decided far away from the State Department, the Defense Department, and *even the National Security Council*” (emphasis added).⁷² Again, this was certainly not the intent of the *National Security Act*.

In addition, President Nixon’s dominant managerial style led to ensuring that control of foreign policy resided in the White House.⁷³ Kissinger expanded the NSC staff so that it could handle numerous foreign policy issues. While the staff did analytical foreign policy work, as well as continuing its role as a policy coordination body, Kissinger also formulated his own extensive written recommendations for President Nixon, who preferred them to NSC group meetings.⁷⁴ Complicating matters, secretary of state William Rogers was often not consulted on issues regarding major policy positions and decisions.⁷⁵ Illustrating this point was the fact that Nixon sent Kissinger instead of Rogers to negotiate for the United States at the Vietnam War Paris peace talks.

Kissinger’s dominance of foreign policy through the NSC machinery had detrimental side effects on the national security process. The increased size of the NSC staff tended to further “complicate and prolong an already tedious and constipated decision-making process,” by taking “matters which [had] already been subjected to the most exhaustive review in the State Department, and by State with other agencies,” then dissecting, dismantling, and putting them back together again. This not only had a devastating effect on the morale of the State Department, it led to a continuing cycle of distrust of the NSC which caused it to take months, instead of weeks and days, to make decisions, which by then were out of date or immaterial. On a

positive note, Kissinger elevated the stature of the NSC staff to the prominent position it enjoys to this day and was previously unaccustomed to, and by doing so, enduringly boosted its influence and capacity. Ultimately, because the NSC staff does not typically testify before Congress, the NSC staff can create significant divisions of opinion with the rest of the executive branch, particularly the White House, possibly resulting in the breakdown of the entire national security apparatus.⁷⁶

After President Nixon resigned, President Ford inherited the remnant NSC structure. At the time, Kissinger had been serving as both the NSA and as the secretary of state.⁷⁷ Over a year after becoming president, Ford took Kissinger out of the NSA post, but left him as the secretary of state, appointing Brent Scowcroft to the former position. Scowcroft assumed the intended traditional role of the NSA, coordinating policy between the cabinet departments and principals and providing advice to President Ford.⁷⁸

Pres. Ronald Reagan's two terms in office saw an unprecedented number of NSAs. Of the 20 NSAs that have held the post, six served in President Reagan's administration. Richard Allen was the first, and unlike many of his predecessors, was relegated to the basement of the White House and his advice marginalized.⁷⁹ William Clark was Reagan's second advisor and was a close friend who wielded influence beyond his professional capacity in the position. His third and fourth advisors, Robert McFarlane and John Poindexter, were career military officers accustomed to paying deference to the commander in chief, and thus lacked the fortitude to assert themselves in disputes where their opinions were counter to either the secretaries of state or defense.⁸⁰

Frank Carlucci was President Reagan's fifth NSA and, as a result of his lifelong experience in government, played a more significant role, perhaps more so than any of the previous four. His many years as a Foreign Service officer working for the State Department and time he spent at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) likely gave him an advanced grasp of foreign policy, national security issues, and interagency experience. After about a year in the post he then went on to become President Reagan's last secretary of defense.

Last, but certainly not least, Colin Powell served President Reagan. He brought a more forthright and collegial personality to the post than the previous military officers who held the position and was primarily responsible for implementing many of the NSC structural change recommendations issued in the Tower Commission report stemming from the Iran-Contra affair.⁸¹ The commission identified several specific roles for the NSA to assist the president in effectively managing national security affairs (see appendix C for a complete list of the recommendations made by the President's Special Review Board). Furthermore, as Best observed: "Although NSC staff efforts to manage certain crises, such as the capture of the *Achille Lauro* hijackers, were successful, the participation of the NSC personnel, especially Lt Col Oliver North, in operations run apart from the traditional intelligence apparatus, including efforts to gain the release of American hostages and to supply Nicaraguan insurgents, has been widely censured."⁸²

In contrast to President Reagan, Pres. George H. W. Bush appointed a single veteran advisor, Brent Scowcroft, to the post; Scowcroft would serve his entire presidency. Scowcroft was no stranger to the position of NSA. He and President Bush worked well together in dealing with arguably some of the biggest national security issues since the Vietnam War. Beginning with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and subsequent German unification in the fall of 1989, through the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union into the 1990s, and the 1991 Persian Gulf War and into the uncertain international order that followed, Scowcroft and Bush attempted to establish an NSC system patterned after the original mold.⁸³ In addition, as mentioned earlier, President Bush is credited with reorganizing and establishing the modern NSC system's committee structure.

When Pres. Bill Clinton came into office, he seemingly placed greater emphasis on economic matters than foreign policy issues. He kept President Bush's successful model in place, however, falsely believing "that choosing the 'correct' NSC organization and process was the key to producing a successful foreign policy."⁸⁴ According to Inderfurth and Johnson, this was only partially correct. Good processes and organization are only part of the equation, but they do not ensure the sound policymaking

that leads to sound decisions. Individuals and their skill sets and experience go further than these basic building blocks when it comes to making sensible choices. Add to that a president who understands how the system works, gets personally involved, then allows the system to function properly, and there will be a strong foundation for sound policymaking.⁸⁵

Pres. George W. Bush has built on the previous two presidential administrations' NSC systems, but with varied success. He expanded the participation in formal NSC meetings by inviting his chief of staff, counsel, secretary of the treasury, assistant for economic policy, and the assistant for homeland security.⁸⁶ The attacks of 11 September 2001 and their consequences have defined George W. Bush's presidency. These events precipitated changes in the NSC system including unprecedented increases to the NSC staff and the number of PCCs, as well as the addition of two special interagency working groups designed to better coordinate "the activities of the large commitments of US military, reconstruction, and diplomatic contingents in Afghanistan and Iraq."⁸⁷

President Bush's two NSAs, Condoleezza Rice and Stephen Hadley, have performed as well as can be expected given the circumstances of world events.⁸⁸ Their previous experience on the NSC staff has been of tremendous benefit in leading the staff. Coming from academia, Condoleezza Rice brought a critical thinking and experienced analytical perspective to the position.⁸⁹ Analysis of the process that led to the decision to invade Iraq and the Bush administration's expressed reasons for the necessity of that invasion suggest breakdowns in the policy coordination and advisory role played by Rice.⁹⁰ Rice's function as an honest broker in the interagency process deteriorated as the president began to expect her to serve instead as "a private counselor to the president and as [a] public spokesperson."⁹¹ Stephen Hadley, who served as Rice's deputy NSA and succeeded her as NSA, attempted to return to the policy-coordinating and honest-brokering role originally envisioned for the NSA.⁹² Some evidence suggests, however, that coordination with the rest of the cabinet and other interagency organizations may still be lacking.⁹³

Noteworthy National Security Council Changes over Time

President Truman kept the NSC at arm's length during its first three years. Instead of receiving counsel from the NSC, he relied on a succession of personal White House advisers (George Elsey, Rear Adm Robert Dennison, and William Averell Harriman) to coordinate major foreign policy matters for him, in opposition to the notion of calling upon congressional legislators who could more expertly advise him on national security matters.⁹⁴ In 1949 the *National Security Act* was amended, and the NSC system was reorganized to include the vice president but the three service secretaries were removed with the newly created secretary of defense in their places.⁹⁵

Despite the lack of presidential use in the late 1940s, the NSC functioned as a major presidential forum into the 1950s. "The challenges faced by the formation of NATO, the humanitarian and reconstruction requirements for Europe, the Soviet Union entering the nuclear age, and the communists gaining control of China all mandated [further] changes to the NSC."⁹⁶ When the Korean War began, the NSC met more frequently with President Truman, not only attending and working through Korean challenges, but also the larger political issues in response to the Communist threat.⁹⁷ President Truman appreciated the work and policy studies produced by the NSC staff and issued a presidential directive in 1950 stressing that all policy advice and coordination should come to the president through the NSC system process.⁹⁸

Within two years after its creation, the NSC was already functioning with a strong sense of teamwork, coherence, and direction.⁹⁹ That is no surprise considering that, in the first 115 weeks of the Eisenhower administration, the formal NSC met 115 times, which in fact turned out to be the frequency zenith of all presidents' use of the NSC.¹⁰⁰ President Eisenhower's NSC staff also had 28 permanent members with 11 of those termed "thinkers."¹⁰¹ The steep adjustment to more frequent meetings in the new council's life peaked shortly after Eisenhower's second year in office since he had accumulated a full and varied "reservoir of basic policies and forward strategy."¹⁰² These policies generated new ideas on how to organize and

coordinate the vast amount of information generated to preserve national security.

An outcome of one of these ideas was a mechanism created by the 1953 executive order called the Operations Coordination Board (OCB), designed to do just that—coordinate operations.¹⁰³ Cutler metaphorically described how the OCB fit in with the maturing policy-making function:

Assume that the National Security Council sits at the top of Policy Hill. On one side of the hill, policy recommendations travel upward through the Planning Board to the Council, where they are thrashed out and submitted to the President. When the President has approved a policy recommendation, it travels down the other side of Policy Hill to the departments and agencies responsible for its execution. Each department or agency with a function to perform under such approved policy must prepare its program to carry out its responsibility. Part way down this side of the hill is the *Operations Coordinating Board*, to which the President refers an approved national security policy as its authority to advise with the relevant departments and agencies as to their detailed operational planning and as to coordinating the interdepartmental aspects of their respective programs. *In no sense is the O.C.B. concerned with the making of policy.* While it cannot make or negate programs to carry out a policy, it may assist in developing them. The Board is a co-ordinator and an expeditor and a follower-up and a progress reporter.¹⁰⁴ (emphasis added)

The OCB persisted as a part of the NSC staff structure for eight years before it was abolished by executive order in 1961. The OCB met weekly at the State Department and was comprised of the under secretary of state for political affairs, the deputy secretary of defense, the directors of the CIA, the US Information Agency, the International Communication Agency, and the special assistants to the president for national security affairs and security operations coordination. If this composition looks familiar, it is because it was the predecessor to the modern-day DEPC discussed earlier in the chapter.

The OCB was the coordinating and implementing arm of the NSC for all aspects of the implementation of national security policy. NSC action papers were assigned to a team from the OCB for follow-up. During its existence, the OCB established more than 40 interagency working groups with experts covering various countries and subjects. The 24-person staff of the OCB supported the working groups in which officials from various agencies met each other to staff and coordinate policy.¹⁰⁵ With the OCB's termination, the NSC staff "focused on policy-

making and became less involved in program management and implementation.”¹⁰⁶

Successive presidents varied their meeting frequency vis-à-vis the formal NSC process. Under President Kennedy the NSC continued to hold formal meetings but not with the frequency that had prevailed under Eisenhower. Not only did Kennedy prefer fewer meetings—16 within the first six months in office and less frequently thereafter—he preferred less formal ones.¹⁰⁷ “Moreover, the meetings themselves were seldom significant forums of policy debate or decision.”¹⁰⁸ In all, Kennedy averaged about one meeting a week, attending 49.¹⁰⁹ After a very short period following his inauguration, Kennedy reduced the NSC staff from 74 to 49, with a dozen of them being thinkers.¹¹⁰ Kennedy’s NSA, McGeorge Bundy, and his NSC staff tried to focus on their core task of policy development and providing coordinated advice, but instead they served primarily as Kennedy’s personal—and oftentimes political—advisers.¹¹¹

Many scholars have speculated that this lack of utilizing the NSC system processes led to a “groupthink” phenomenon among very few men, which may have contributed to the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, as well as the confusion surrounding US policy in the coup against Pres. Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam in 1963.¹¹² Had alternative policy options been coordinated, reviewed, and then presented to President Kennedy through the formal NSC process, the Cuba incident might never have happened. The failed invasion led to deep distrust by Cuba of American intentions which was compounded the following year when the world was on the brink of nuclear war during the 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis. After the Bay of Pigs failure, President Kennedy fortunately made dramatic changes to the NSC which were arguably critical to the Cuban Missile Crisis’ successful outcome—the avoidance of nuclear war.

By the time Kennedy was assassinated, the core of foreign policy and national security policy making had fully transitioned from the cabinet to the White House, or what former Pentagon official and journalist Leslie Gelb termed, “from the king’s ministers to his palace guard.”¹¹³ A complete reversal of Truman’s and Eisenhower’s formal NSC process had occurred through Kennedy’s unprecedented use of informal structures, and the NSA had developed from a “purely administrative

executive secretary servicing the council's needs to a powerful political presidential adviser.”¹¹⁴

The pattern of informality trademarked by President Kennedy continued when President Johnson took office. Johnson preferred a more relaxed atmosphere for his meetings, although he still embraced the attendance of statutory members. The Tuesday Lunch Group, as it came to be known as, met 27 times from February to September 1964, with President Johnson convening approximately 160 Tuesday luncheons during his presidency. By comparison, midway through President Nixon's term, his NSC had held 73 meetings with half of those being held in his first year. “This twice-a-month average was nearly double that of the Johnson Administration.”¹¹⁵ The number of President Ford's NSC engagements fell somewhere between the two, averaging one and a half times per month in his first 20 months in office. Approaching the 30th anniversary of the creation of the NSC in 1977, scholar I. M. Destler concluded that, up to the writing of his article, regular use of the formal council was more the exception than the rule. He also astutely observed that the “formality and regularity of [the NSC's] membership and meetings; [and] pre-established, well-disseminated agendas—prove[d] to be drawbacks in practice,” suggesting that smaller, more informal meetings lacking precoordinated agendas accomplished more.¹¹⁶

During President Nixon's term, Henry Kissinger reversed the lower staffing trend, quickly bringing the number of thinkers from 12 to 34,¹¹⁷ and eventually to 50 by the end of Nixon's presidency.¹¹⁸ President Ford did not alter this mix much other than reorganizing the intelligence community,¹¹⁹ but when President Carter came to office, he reduced the size of the “thinking” staff to around 35 and decreased the size of standing NSC committees from seven to two.¹²⁰

President Carter made other significant changes to the NSC system when he took office. One of his first acts was to issue Presidential Directive 2 reorganizing the NSC staff with the purpose of placing “more responsibility in the departments and agencies while insuring that the NSC, with [his] Assistant for National Security Affairs, continu[ing] to integrate and facilitate foreign and defense policy decisions.”¹²¹ He also decreased the number of formal meetings, convening only 10, compared

with 125 meetings during the eight years of the combined Nixon and Ford administrations.¹²²

The focus of President Reagan's terms of office was characterized less by the frequency of NSC meetings and more by changes to the structure, processes, control, and flow of information to the president. Shortly after taking office, President Reagan downgraded the NSA's status via National Security Decision Directive 2 to defuse the rivalry that had existed between the NSC and the State Department in previous administrations.¹²³ Significantly, this directive gave responsibility for the NSC subcommittees to various officials from the Departments of State and Defense and the CIA rather than consolidating their functions under NSC officials. This structure led to a lack of unity of effort and uncertainty regarding lines of responsibility. It also stifled effective decision making, diminished the likelihood that fair and balanced policy recommendations would filter up to the president and may have contributed to the Iran-Contra affair.¹²⁴ The President's Special Review Board, also known as the Tower Commission, was established by President Reagan and published recommendations to this effect, remarking:

Most presidents have set up interagency committees at both a staff and policy level to surface issues, develop options, and clarify choices. There has typically been a struggle for the chairmanship of these groups between the National Security Advisor and the NSC staff on the one hand, and the cabinet secretaries and department officials on the other. Our review of the operation of the present system and that of other administrations where committee chairmen came from the departments has led us to the conclusion that the system generally operates better when the committees are chaired by the individual with the greatest stake in making the NSC system work. We recommend that the National Security Advisor chair the senior-level committees of the NSC system.¹²⁵

Another change President Reagan made was in the creation of more hierarchical policy structures. He established three senior interdepartmental groups (SIG) for foreign, defense, and intelligence problems, chaired respectively by the secretaries of state and defense and the director of central intelligence. Under the SIGs, a series of assistant-secretary-level interdepartmental groups, each chaired by the agency with particular responsibility, dealt with specific issues. The NSC staff was responsible for the assignment of issues to the groups.¹²⁶

President Reagan also made other significant structural changes by creating additional groups that further subdivided an already hierarchical and compartmentalized policy coordinating security apparatus. Among these groups was the National Security Planning Group, which was created in 1981, met weekly, and was composed of the vice president, the secretaries of state and defense, the director of central intelligence, the CJCS, and the NSA.¹²⁷ Another was the Crisis Management Center, headquartered within the White House and comprised of a large staff of its own to manage developing crises and facilitate decision making.¹²⁸

During the George H. W. Bush administration, the Bill Clinton administration, and the George W. Bush administration, the NSC system, for the most part, became stronger and more mature. According to Inderfurth and Johnson, “while there have been variations in the decision-making style of each President, there has also been unprecedented continuity in the *formal* structure of the NSC system, reflected best in the continuation of the principals and deputies committees” (emphasis in original).¹²⁹ Although these structures have in fact reinforced the strength of the US national security apparatus, shortcomings in the way the major players in the policy coordination and advisory process functioned outside the prescribed manner have led to high-level policy failures.¹³⁰

President Clinton expanded the NSC membership by presidential order to include the secretary of the treasury, the US representative to the United Nations, the assistant to the president for economic policy, and the White House chief of staff.¹³¹ In this vein, perhaps the most significant change President Clinton made was in creating a National Economic Council by Executive Order 12835 on 25 January 1993, to coordinate and consider international economic policy within the NSC and balance what he perceived as a system too narrowly focused on diplomatic and national security issues.¹³² The head of this body, the assistant to the president for economic policy, was given a statutory seat at the NSC table. These changes were made to ensure that economic considerations were factored into traditional national security policy thinking. President Clinton’s first NSA, Anthony Lake, started out his tenure claiming to be a “behind-the-scenes consensus builder,” but later he

decided to change his approach: “I would stay behind the scenes. . . . And I would do my best always to try to achieve consensus and to make sure that my colleagues’ views always had a fair hearing with the President. But I would be less hesitant in voicing my own views when they differed from those of my colleagues, even if it prevented consensus or put me more at odds with them—whether on NATO enlargement, Bosnia, Haiti, or other issues.”¹³³ Samuel Berger, who succeeded Lake in March 1997, really exhibited the role Lake professed to engender back when Lake began his appointment. Berger’s role in keeping the integrity of the NSC system dependable regarding the conflict in Kosovo in 1999, while also mollifying traditional disagreements between the secretaries of state and defense, lent tremendous credibility to the Clinton administration.¹³⁴

The September 2001 terrorist attacks resulted in major changes to the national security apparatus, including the creation of a Homeland Security Council (HSC) in October 2001 and a Department of Homeland Security in March 2003.¹³⁵ The creation of the HSC is largely viewed today as the logical reaction to what was viewed as shortcomings in the ability to detect homeland security threats. Its existence outside and parallel to the NSC indicates both the significance and the scope of effort required to analyze homeland defense requirements in the post 11 September 2001 security environment. Perhaps it will come under the NSC when, and if, terrorist threats are ever considered manageable.

Changes in the size and function of the NSC staff also reflected the nature and scope of world events as well as presidential preferences. It has been a relatively easy task to make these changes since the *National Security Act* made it possible for presidents to do so without legislation or any other approval. According to Zegart, by “using executive orders, presidential directives, and other self-executing commands to create the national security adviser’s position; to alter fundamentally the NSC staff’s role, power, and jurisdiction; and to downgrade the operation of the formal National Security Council,” the president’s power has gone unchecked. Through this process, presidents have sometimes committed the nation to pursue reckless courses of action.¹³⁶ Finally, the US Commission on National Security/21st Century noted that:

Over the last decade, Presidents have increasingly centralized power with the NSC staff for the making and execution of national security policy. In many ways, the NSC staff has become more like a government agency than a Presidential staff. It has its own views and perspectives on the myriad of national security issues confronting the government. It has its own press, legislative, communication, and speechmaking “shops” to enable it to conduct ongoing relations with the media, Congress, the American public, and foreign governments.¹³⁷

This last quotation combined with supporting evidence provided in this chapter seem to indicate that presidents, their NSCs, and their NSAs have at times strayed far from the original intentions of the statutes of the *National Security Act of 1947*.

Notes

1. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 56. Zegart notes that Truman initially did not welcome the NSC, but eventually “championed” it in order to get Navy support for his unification plan. John Deutch, Arnold Kantner, and Brent Scowcroft attribute the “primary motivation” for the creation of the NSC to the “recognition that the nation’s foreign policy interests could not be pursued exclusively through the efforts of executive departments acting separately.” Carter and White, *Keeping the Edge*, 265. However, most evidence suggests individual (Forrestal, Eberstadt) and institutional (US Navy) interests in the defense arena played a larger role in the creation. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, s.v. “National Security Council.”

2. See Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 51–52, for a brief but thorough accounting of attempts dating to as early as 1910 calling for defense councils of various types to help coordinate the increasingly complex nature of national defense. The “Eberstadt Report” of 1945 states that commitments made under the umbrella of the Monroe Doctrine in the nineteenth century overcommitted the United States such that “the history of our foreign relations in the twentieth century is a story of failure. It is the story of our national failure to balance the commitments that were made in the nineteenth century. Because of that failure we have been compelled to fight two great unexpected wars for which we were unprepared.” *Ibid.*, 51.

3. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 69, note 3.

4. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 54.

5. *Ibid.*, 53. The SWNCC was mostly seen as a failure primarily because the problems it was intended to address were too large. It (1) was not organized at a high level, (2) was not vested with appropriate authority and power, and (3) did not have a permanent secretariat (unlike its archetype). *Ibid.*, 54.

6. Johnson, “British Committee of Imperial Defence,” 252–53.

7. Stevenson, “Underlying Assumptions,” 2–3. This report was 250 pages long and advocated arguments *against* defense consolidation using the idea of a National Security Council as somewhat of a ‘consolation’ substitute.

8. Best, *National Security Council*, 6.
9. Destler, "National Security Advice," 147. According to Destler the NSC was considered "Forrestal's revenge."
10. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 57.
11. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, s.v. "National Security Council."
12. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 6.
13. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 57, 64, and 65.
14. *Ibid.*, 66.
15. Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 80. The *National Security Act* signed by President Truman culminated four years of intense debate and resulted in more than just the creation of the NSC. It also made the Department of the Air Force separate from the other service departments, it granted statutory authority to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it created the Central Intelligence Agency, and made provisions for the creation of other bodies and committees. Among these were the National Security Resources Board, a War Council, a Munitions Board, and a Research and Development Board.
16. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 74–75.
17. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 52. Interestingly, the secretary of state is missing from this list.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Hammond, "National Security Council," 899; and US Bureau of the Budget, *United States at War*, 2.
20. Best, *National Security Council*, 3.
21. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 52.
22. Souers, "Policy Formulation," 534.
23. Lord, "NSC Reform," 434; and Best, *National Security Council*, 5.
24. Lord, "NSC Reform," 434 and 435. See also Carter and White, *Keeping the Edge*, 266.
25. *National Security Act of 1947*.
26. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 442–43 and 451–52.
27. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 10.
28. *National Security Act of 1947*, Sections 101 and 102; Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 18; US Senate, "National Security Act of 1947," 2.
29. Souers, "Policy Formulation," 537.
30. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 78.
31. Souers, "Policy Formulation," 537.
32. Destler, "National Security Advice," 156.
33. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 343.
34. See section entitled "Truman Administration, 1947–1953" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.
35. Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 7. Also see Bumiller, *Condoleezza Rice*, and Public Broadcasting Service, "Frontline Interviews Elizabeth Bumiller." According to then national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, in the first days of President Bush's administration, Vice President Cheney went to the presi-

dent asking him if he could run the NSC meetings in the president's absence. Upon hearing of this, Rice went to the president in protest, stating: "Mr. President, this is what national security advisers do. They've already run National Security Council meetings in the president's absence." The president subsequently sided with Rice.

36. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 94, quoting from *US Statutes at Large 1948*, 497.

37. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 443.

38. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 65. Zegart notes that the NSC staff was to be a nonpartisan and permanent body, unspecified in size, tasked with preparing agendas, providing data, and distributing the NSC's conclusions to affected departments and agencies.

39. Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 7. The size of the NSC in 2007 numbered around 225 with approximately 110 of those serving in policy positions. See Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 11.

40. Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 91–92. Former national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski provides an interesting observation of this phenomenon, concluding that "as the prestige of the NSC declined, its size increased and its titles were inflated."

41. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 10. A mix of political appointees (from academia and think tank organizations), senior government officials from other executive branch departments and military officers round out most of the staff's backgrounds.

42. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 23, and Gerstein, *Securing America's Future*, 78.

43. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 11–12, and 23–24.

44. Ibid., 12–13. The "deputies" include the deputy secretary of state (or under secretary of state for political affairs), under secretary of the treasury (or under secretary of the treasury for international affairs), deputy secretary of defense (or under secretary of defense for policy), deputy attorney general, deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, deputy DNI (or the director of the National Counterterrorism Center), vice CJCS, deputy chief of staff to the president for policy, chief of staff, NSA to the vice president, deputy assistant to the president for homeland security affairs, deputy assistant to the president for international economics, and the deputy national security advisor.

45. Ibid., 13; and Gerstein, *Securing America's Future*, 146.

46. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 13.

47. Ibid., 14–15.

48. *National Security Act of 1947*, 402.

49. Souers, "Policy Formulation," 535. Robert Cutler also described the Council's purpose in practical terms as follows: "to integrate the manifold aspects of national security policy (such as foreign, military, economic, fiscal, internal security, psychological) to the end that security policies finally recommended to the President shall be *both representative and fused, rather than*

compartmentalized and several" (emphasis added). See Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 441.

50. Souers, "Policy Formulation," 536.

51. Ibid., 540. For a more thorough discussion of how the NSC and staff operated in 1949, see *ibid.*, 538–42.

52. Greenstein and Immerman, "Effective National Security Advising," 340.

53. *Ibid.*

54. See Lord, "NSC Reform," 436; and Destler, "National Security Advice,"

152. According to Destler the most thorough of these was the yearly overview document entitled "Basic National Security Policy."

55. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 79; and Souers, "Policy Formulation," 536.

56. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 343.

57. Stevenson, "Underlying Assumptions," 133.

58. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 11.

59. According to the current deputy executive secretary, NSC, Lt Col James Regenor, "records are kept for *almost* all meetings in some form or another" (emphasis added). Regenor to the author, email.

60. Clifford, "Workings of the National Security System," 19–20; Stevens, "National Security Council," 56–57; and Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 83.

61. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 442; and Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 329.

62. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 443; and Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 80–81.

63. Destler, "National Security Advice," 161.

64. *Ibid.*, 158.

65. Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 87. Regarding the Vietnam War, Nixon stated, "This is all going to take time, but I can assure you that it will have my personal attention. It will have my personal direction. The Secretary of State, my Adviser for National Security Affairs, the Secretary of Defense, all of us will give it every possible attention and we hope to come up with some new approaches." Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 86–87.

66. President Eisenhower today stands as the greatest exception among presidents who have operated under the NSC system in terms of the number of frequent formal NSC meetings he conducted, however, according to former NSC staffer under Pres. George W. Bush—Dr. Meghan O'Sullivan—noted, "for years, the President has had regular (generally in the form of weekly) NSC meetings on Iraq, and perhaps NSC meetings on Afghanistan every fortnight. O'Sullivan to the author, e-mail.

67. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 87.

68. Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 82.

69. *Ibid.*, 88, 81–82.

70. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 342.

71. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 81.

72. *Ibid.*, 90.

73. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 8.

74. *Ibid.*

75. See The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*; Brzezinski, “NSC’s Midlife Crisis,” 86–88; and Lord, *Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 73–74.

76. Yost, “Instruments of American Foreign Policy,” 64–65.

77. Kissinger served in both positions simultaneously from 21 September 1973 through 3 November 1975.

78. See The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*; Lord, *Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 73–74; and Stevens, “National Security Council,” 58–59.

79. Brzezinski, “NSC’s Midlife Crisis,” 89.

80. Ibid., 90; and Best, *National Security Council*, 27–28.

81. See Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 106. Though significant to the history of the NSC, the Iran-Contra Scandal and subsequent congressional and Tower Commission investigation and report findings concluded that the NSC functions and structure were not to blame for the mistakes, but that improper decisions and judgment by NSC staff members was to blame. See Tower, Muskie, and Scowcroft, *Report of the President’s Special Review Board* for in-depth details or Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 71, footnote 23 for a concise summary of the Iran-Contra affair.

82. Best, *National Security Council*, 28.

83. For firsthand accounts of the Bush-Scowcroft partnership see Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, especially 18–19 and 30–56.

84. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 108. See also Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 9. The latter reference is more complementary to President Clinton, stating that, “The biggest change in the Clinton Administration was the emphasis on economics as an element of U.S. national security.”

85. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 108.

86. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 10. Additionally, the attorney general and director of the Office of Management and Budget are invited to attend pertinent formal NSC meetings.

87. Ibid., 14.

88. See Bumiller, *Condoleezza Rice*, and Weisberg, *Bush Tragedy*, for appraisals that are more detailed.

89. See Bumiller, *Condoleezza Rice*.

90. See Woodward, *Bush at War*, 254; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 266–69; Burke, “Contemporary Presidency,” 554–75, but particularly 563; and Pfiffer, “Did President Bush Mislead the Country?” 33.

91. Burke, “Contemporary Presidency,” 555. According to Burke, these additional roles weakened Rice’s brokerage role.

92. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 19.

93. Woodward, *State of Denial*, 379.

94. He attended the first meeting on 26 September 1947, and then stayed away from all but 10 of the next 55 meetings. The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.

95. See *National Security Act of 1947*. Less significant to this paper, the 1949 amendment also designated the director of central intelligence and the Joint Chiefs of Staff as statutory advisers. The chairman of the National Security Resources Board remained until removed in 1973.

96. Gerstein, *Securing America's Future*, 78.

97. Destler, "National Security Advice," 148; and Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 79–80. When the Korean War started, Truman made all but seven of 71 NSC meetings thereafter. See section entitled "Truman Administration, 1947–1953" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*; and Sander, "Truman and the National Security Council," 369–88.

98. Destler, "National Security Advice," 152; and Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 80.

99. Souers, "Policy Formulation," 542–43.

100. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 445. Eisenhower attended a total 329 of 366 NSC meetings. See also the section entitled "Eisenhower Administration, 1953–1961" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.

101. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 455.

102. *Ibid.*, 445.

103. Officially, the OCB was established as an independent agency by Executive Order (EO) 10483, 2 September 1953, to report to the NSC on the development, by appropriate executive branch agencies, of operational plans for national security policies of international import. It was then incorporated into the NSC, effective 1 July 1957, by EO 10700, 25 February 1957. It was abolished by EO 10920, 18 February 1961. "Records of the National Security Council," *Guide to Federal Records*.

104. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 448–49.

105. *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. "History of the United States National Security Council, 1953–1961," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_National_Security_Council_1953-1961.

106. Carter and White, *Keeping the Edge*, 266.

107. Destler, "National Security Advice," 149; Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 86; Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 84; and Gerstein, *Securing America's Future*, 78.

108. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 84.

109. See section entitled "Kennedy Administration, 1961–1963" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.

110. See Bolt, Coletta, and Shackleford, *American Defense Policy*, 161.

111. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 84; Best, *National Security Council*, 15; and Thayer, "Presidential Policy Processes," 555.

112. See Best, *National Security Council*, 17. Also see Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*; and Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*.

113. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 76; and Gelb, "Why Not the State Department?" 26.

114. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 85.

115. See section entitled "Johnson Administration, 1963–1969" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.

116. Destler, "National Security Advice," 150.
117. Section entitled "Nixon Administration, 1969–1974" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.
118. Destler, "National Security Advice," 158.
119. Best, *National Security Council*, 21.
120. Ibid., 23; and Tower, Muskie, and Scowcroft, "Organizing for National Security," 188.
121. Presidential Directive/NSC-2. See also Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 8.
122. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 90; and section entitled "Carter Administration, 1977–1981" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.
123. See Reagan, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 18–22.
124. Best, *National Security Council*, 26–27.
125. See Tower, Muskie, and Scowcroft. *Report of the President's Special Review Board*, "Report of the President," V-5.
126. See section entitled "Reagan Administration, 1981–1989" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.
127. Ibid.
128. Lord, "NSC Reform," 443; and Hinckley, "National Security in the Information Age," 25–39.
129. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 106.
130. The Iran-Contra affair has already been mentioned, but there are also examples in Gertz, *Betrayal*; Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*; Lute, *Improving National Capacity to Respond*; and Woodward, *State of Denial*.
131. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 108. This was called Presidential Decision Directive 2, *Organization of the National Security Council*, issued on 20 January 1993. Best, *National Security Council*, 31.
132. Best, *National Security Council*, 30.
133. Lake, *6 Nightmares*, 131–32.
134. Harris, "Berger's Caution," A24.
135. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 48. For a more in-depth discussion of how these bodies function, see 48–55.
136. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 98.
137. See US Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Road Map for National Security*, 49.

Chapter 4

The Committee of Imperial Defence and the National Security Council: Comparison and Contrast

There is no doubt that the Committee of Imperial Defense . . . had a great deal of influence on the establishment in this country of the National Security Council.

—H. Struve Hensel
Former assistant
secretary of defense, 1954–1955

Although the CID and NSC existed in different historical contexts, their similarities have served to strengthen the legacy of the CID and make clear that, as the prototype for the NSC system, the United States has been served well by the CID's creation and development. Recognizing the similarities and differences between the CID and NSC is easy to do, but explaining their significance is harder, because in doing so, there is a tendency toward bias for one organization *vis-á-vis* the other. The challenge is to assemble objective data for comparison.

The logical place to begin is by looking at the historical context of each organization before and during the creation of each. Before delving deeper into the examination of both of these systems, it is vital to discuss inherent distinctions between the British and American systems of government. In 1961 Frank Arthur Johnson described these differences between the parliamentary and presidential systems: “The American utilization of the British experience, procedures and organization has therefore taken place within the limitations enforced by a setting, for example, of *greater individual leadership by the president* in contrast with the *corporate responsibility of the Prime Minister and cabinet*, of a *competitive* rather than an *intimate executive-legislative relationship*, and of relatively formal, impersonal and transitory bureaucratic arrangements” (emphasis added).¹

The significance of these differences and their implication should neither be lost nor understated. As good as the British

system was within the historical context of its existence, the new ascendant world power—the United States—was ready, willing, and able to step in and take their place as the next leader in the international order. President Truman more succinctly captured the essence of this difference in his memoirs: “In some ways a Cabinet government is more efficient—but under the British system there is a group responsibility of the Cabinet. Under our system the responsibility rests on one man—the President.”² The US system was intentionally structured this way.

America’s founding fathers explicitly separated powers to limit the possibility of tyranny. James Madison notes in “Federalist No. 51” that power is separated three distinct ways: horizontally (executive, legislative, and judicial), vertically (federal, state, and local), and within each branch (House/Senate, multiple departments in the executive branch, and the levels and divisions of the federal judiciary) with that end in mind.³ These separations lead to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness at times, but the framers of the Constitution would likely argue that these are necessary to ensure our freedoms. These separations do lead, though, as Princeton scholar Edward Corwin noted, to “an invitation to struggle for the privilege of directing American foreign policy.”⁴ Because of this, one area that is fundamentally different between the two systems is that the Congress has explicit powers in the foreign policy realm—powers that they are not afraid to wield. This is quite a different domestic political environment than the British system where the prime minister *should* be able to exercise control over his party and any supporting coalition members in the legislature but cannot do so unilaterally.⁵

Like the American experience where Ferdinand Eberstadt and James Forrestal saw defense unification as a catalyst for a national security enterprise that could harness the government departments to formulate and coordinate policy, the British defense establishment of the late nineteenth century was interested in the same. After the British Boer War experiences, the Colonial Defence Committee, the Joint Naval Committee, and the Military Defence Committee were like minded in their view that cabinet harmonization was necessary to improve imperial defense. The prevailing sentiment within the government, however, was that nothing could “alter the unwillingness of states-

men to look abroad and see that the world of British hegemony was changing, and act accordingly.” This intentional unwillingness to consider the changing international order and Britain’s place within it persisted despite operational difficulties in South Africa and the growing German military threat. Though not fully mature, Britain did have the “machinery of government” (the means) in place to cope with these dangers, but apparently chose not to use them.⁶

Since the CID sprang from a *corporately* (to borrow Frank Johnson’s term) administered government, it was created to be nonpartisan, and it remained nonpartisan throughout its existence. The NSC is the product of a *competitive* system but was created with the same intent. Nevertheless, from President Eisenhower forward, the NSC became a partisan and often-times highly politicized organization within the Executive Office of the President. Inderfurth and Johnson found evidence underscoring these differences. They observed that bureaucratic cultures and administrative styles differ significantly in the ways in which British civil servants and their American counterparts view their governmental roles. Regarding the day-to-day political environment of each system, they observed that “American elite civil servants responsibilities begin at a level of authority significantly below that of their British counterparts,” such that “the American system has displayed a penchant for mismatching titles of formal authority and possibilities for influencing policy.”⁷ Nevertheless, the parliamentary and presidential systems, despite their notable differences, seem to reflect a common fundamental premise that recognizes a need for delegated and shared authority within deliberative decision-making processes.

One interesting but otherwise lesser comparison to note is the time taken by each organization to rise to prominence in their respective governments. By 1911 a mere seven years after its establishment, the CID had become “the key forum of imperial consultation upon those policies which determined the external security of the Empire.”⁸ Likewise, within seven years after the NSC’s establishment in 1947, the NSC system under President Eisenhower had “evolved into the principal arm of the President in formulating and executing policy on military, international, and internal security affairs.”⁹

Another more interesting comparison between the two organizations concerns the influence of the CID secretary and the NSA. Positive influence on the prime minister and president depended on the demonstrated competency, organizational professionalism, and trust engendered by each. For the CID, Lord Hankey had succeeded in his role of looking at the whole of imperial security and providing his committee's coordinated perspective to the prime minister and cabinet. As his success endured, the trust and confidence Lord Hankey earned with prime ministers served to elevate his standing: "once the Prime Minister had full confidence in him (as they all did), his position was at least as influential as that of a cabinet minister backed by a great department of state."¹⁰ The American system has corresponding examples. President Reagan seemed to have had similar trust in Frank Carlucci and Colin Powell, Pres. George H. W. Bush in Brent Scowcroft, President Clinton in Samuel Berger, and Pres. George W. Bush in Stephen Hadley.

With respect to committee structures, both organizations evolved through the addition of numerous committees and informal arrangements. At the height of World War II, the CID had 733 subcommittees. The number of NSC committees has also increased to an unprecedented and correspondingly high number (at least 34), by comparison, of PCCs and interagency working groups.¹¹ Arguably, the span of control for such large and diffuse organizations tends to stifle high-quality policy ideas and advice from fully making it to the top of the organization. In fact, the Esher Committee report and Prime Minister Balfour expressed caution over the fast growing CID. With its expanding secretariat and increasing numbers of subcommittees, the potential for smooth coordination to wane accordingly became a real concern. Lord Hankey commiserated over the issue of a greater number of CID participants and observed, "this increase in numbers made the Committee rather unwieldy, overcrowded the room, and led to the delegation of business more and more to the subcommittees" resulting in "one of the principal causes of the ineffectiveness of the Committee of Imperial Defence."¹² This in turn "mitigated against [the] free and open discussion of controversial issues of national policy."¹³

Coupled with the bureaucratic inefficiency that often accompanies government largesse, Esher and Balfour were also con-

cerned the CID's work would compete directly with the War Office and Admiralty. To counter this possibility, they worked hard to ensure the CID stay "as objective and free of bias towards either service as possible. Only as the Prime Minister's servant and as a body linked with all the national interests concerned, and not as a third department having independent interests and prestige, could the [CID] achieve Esher's and Balfour's aim."¹⁴ It does appear that this aim was achieved by the prodigious efforts of the secretaries and prime ministers who served with the CID.

Yet another comparison between the CID and NSC rests in America's decision to make the president the NSC chairman, as the British had made the prime minister the CID chairman. Since the prime minister was politically responsible for leading the country in war as well as peace, the Esher Committee and Prime Minister Balfour agreed that Britain had, through the head of the government, a permanent and powerful means for planning and coordinating by the CID the carrying out of the "heavy obligations" of empire.¹⁵ There really was no debate in the United States as to who would chair the NSC as it was always intended to be led by the president. Thus, from the end of World War I on, as America's place as the world leader became clearer, and as the Eberstadt Report of 1945 clearly stated, establishing a national security apparatus blueprinted on the soundness of the CID model meant the US chief executive alone would chair it.¹⁶

Another likeness, albeit of lesser significance, between the CID and the NSC was in the wording of the descriptions of the secretary and executive secretary, respectively. According to the Treasury Minute establishing the CID in 1904, the secretary's administrative duties and executive functions were threefold:

1. preservation of records of deliberations,
2. procurement of information and documents on imperial defense, and
3. provision of continuity of method in the treatment of questions coming before the CID.¹⁷

By comparison the executive secretary's duties were necessarily vague: "The executive secretary, subject to the direction of the

Council, is authorized . . . to appoint and fix the compensation of such personnel as may be necessary to perform such duties as may be prescribed by the Council in connection with the performance of its functions.”¹⁸ Understandably, the relative formless lack of specificity in both duty descriptions was intended to permit maximum flexibility to each. By operating in this manner, however, the American system has functioned well outside its statute, thereby contributing to the several policy missteps already described in this study.

Nowhere in the *National Security Act of 1947* is there provision for the NSA position. The executive secretary’s duties were assumed by the assistant to the president for national security affairs at the beginning of President Eisenhower’s administration. This position was then downgraded to an “administrative and logistical one” becoming the NSA.¹⁹ The NSA’s position and duties, therefore, have never been statutorily established, and the NSA has remained an independent advisor to the president not subject to congressional oversight. This helps explain the wide range within which NSAs have conducted their duties over the last 60 years. According to former career US diplomat Charles Yost, transforming the executive secretary position into that of the NSA has created “one of the most conspicuous and prestigious policy makers in Washington, [who is] not normally or necessarily nonpartisan.”²⁰ This again begs the question of whether or not independence, nonpartisanship, and not being subject to congressional oversight are always necessarily beneficial attributes of the American NSA.

The partisan aspects of the NSA’s position have a mixed past in interagency politics. Oftentimes, bringing all interagency perspectives to the NSC requires that the NSA remains a bias-free policy coordinator and adviser to the president. President Clinton’s NSC, in its efforts regarding Kosovo, is a widely acknowledged example of this kind of success thanks to NSA Samuel Berger who, “focused on the political dimension of policy-making and sought to avoid options that might lead to paralyzing debate in this country or other NATO states.” A middle ground was successfully negotiated between a possible ground war and capitulation to Serb aggression.²¹ Another good example would be Brent Scowcroft’s consistency in serving the first President Bush. According to the official White House his-

tory, the NSC under Scowcroft's leadership "maintained good relationships with the other agencies, and Secretary of State Baker and Scowcroft appear to have maintained the most comradely working terms. Through the collapse of the USSR and the unification of Germany, Operation Just Cause which sent American troops into Panama in December 1989, and Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the NSC worked effectively in facilitating a series of American foreign policy successes."²²

When the national security advisor functions outside the appropriate boundaries for the position, foreign policy errors and government embarrassment can easily result. Examples of this include President Kennedy's Bay of Pigs fiasco, President Carter's failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran, and President Reagan's Iran-Contra affair. Likewise, President Nixon's consolidation of national security and foreign policy power in the hands of one man—Henry Kissinger—deeply attenuated interagency coordination. Kissinger, also with President Nixon's approval, changed the NSC committee structure to make himself the chairman of six key NSC-related committees, highly politicizing his role and thereby limiting the free flow of cabinet department deliberations to the president.²³

While the likenesses and differences between the CID and NSC say much to describe how each organization influenced the policymaking of two world powers, other, lesser, similarities and differences also can contribute to understanding of these unique institutions.

One such difference is reflected in the way the CID changed in structure, authority, and name in the transition from peacetime to wartime. The CID's effective transition to a war footing is not nearly as significant as the transformation that was thereby wrought in the workings of the entire British government. Recall chapter 1. Left unstated there was, during World War I, the fact that the CID took on the responsibility of fulfilling the functions of a general staff. Not only did the CID—called the War Cabinet in wartime—function in its traditional national security coordination and advisory role; it also assumed the equivalent roles of today's US Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (including the Joint Staff), the NSC, and certain tasks of the US Department of State.²⁴ All of this would fall under the leadership of the secretariat, thus putting considerable

discretionary power into one man's hands. Add to this speculation that the war cabinet held executive authority similar to that of the prime minister and cabinet and the result is the makings of a nation's nearly stand-alone, full-government apparatus within the war cabinet.²⁵ No comparable similarities of this scope and scale can be made with the NSC system, since the United States preserves the principle, at least, of divided government in peace and in war.²⁶

A more obvious similarity is that the CID and the NSC were both essentially products of wars—the CID came out of the Boer Wars and the NSC from World War II. Another similarity was the flexibility in membership of both the CID and NSC as determined by the head of government. In the British system, the prime minister selected “with absolute discretion” the participating members of the CID.²⁷ The president's ability to choose the NSA, executive secretary, and a handful of others is similar, except that the majority of the president's choices for key positions in his NSC (i.e., cabinet level secretaries, etc.) were and are subject to congressional confirmation, while a few others (the NSA and some other key positions) are not. In the British CID system, however, the prime minister simply picked whom he wanted for key positions.

Other slight differences existed in the general compositions of each organization's staff. Whereas the CID's staff was always “equally divided between military and civilian representatives,”²⁸ the NSC staff began with a predominance of military officers that has evolved today into an organization comprised mostly of highly educated academics with only a handful of military officers.²⁹ This is understandable considering the CID was initially conceived as a *defense* committee encompassing the entirety of British military defense, which also doubled in assuming the larger national security responsibilities. While the NSC system from its conception was designed solely to address broader national security issues, the *National Security Act* that created it established the separate Department of Defense in order to manage defense and military responsibilities.

Lastly, the NSC presidential national security policy decision documents issued by the president are direct descendants of the British war books and the chiefs of staff subcommittee reports process.³⁰ These systems established the procedural tone

for their respective chief executive's administrations by providing necessary direction to every national security professional in each system. Likewise, each of these document systems served a parallel purpose of authorizing executive actions for which the government departments and agencies were obliged to implement or execute.

Notes

1. Johnson, "British Committee of Imperial Defence," 232. See also Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 50 for further distinctions between the features of the British and American systems of government.
2. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense*, 230.
3. See Madison, "Federalist No. 51."
4. See Corwin, Bland, Hindson, and Peltason, *The President*, 171.
5. Huggins to author, e-mail.
6. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 35, 43.
7. Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 298–99.
8. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 113.
9. See section entitled, "Eisenhower Administration, 1953–1961" in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.
10. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 128.
11. Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, 13–15.
12. Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 48. Hankey further observed that if the top-heavy "elder statesmen were to be retained, the Committee would have been as large as the Cabinet and in addition overweighted with persons without responsibility. Yet to throw them overboard would have been discourteous."
13. d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 116.
14. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 72.
15. Ibid., 67.
16. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 48.
17. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 70.
18. *National Security Act of 1947*, Section 402 (c).
19. See Best, *National Security Council*, 12, particularly note 16.
20. Yost, "Instruments of American Foreign Policy," 64.
21. Best, *National Security Council*, 32; and Harris, "Berger's Caution," A24.
22. See section entitled "Bush Administration, 1989–1992," in The Whitehouse, *History of the National Security Council*.
23. See Best, *National Security Council*, 67. Committees Kissinger chaired included the Senior Review Group (noncrisis, nonarms-control matters), the Washington Special Actions Group (serious crises), the Verification Panel (arms control negotiations), the 40 Committee (clandestine operations), the Intelligence Committee (intelligence community policy), and the Defense Program Review Committee (how the defense budget relates to foreign policy aims).
24. This statement loses a bit of significance when you consider the United Kingdom did not have a Chiefs of Staff Committee until 1923, nor a Secretary

THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

of State for Defence until April 1964. Without a leader for the Ministry of Defence (the Ministry of Defence was not created until 1940 by Winston Churchill), it is easy to understand how their organizational functions were absorbed over the course of the war. As an aside, the US Department of Defense's Joint Chiefs of Staff system is a direct descendent from the British system. In July 1942 the office of "Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief" (the president) position was created. The incumbant also was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Fleet Adm William Leahy was the first officer appointed to this position analogous to that held by Britain's Lord Ismay who was the chief of staff to the British minister of defence. One important difference between the two positions is worth noting. Leahy sat the chair of the JCS while Ismay did not sit the British equivalent. See Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 319; and Joint Chiefs of Staff, *History of the Joint Staff*, section entitled "Origin of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," for more info.

25. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 139; Ismay, "Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence," 243; and Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference*, 85.

26. Of course, arguable exceptions to this statement exist. A case could be made that in fact every president has made intra-NSC changes or additions and subtractions to committee sizes and the like and has expanded the NSC system in response to world events. Examples include creating the Homeland Security Council, which was a response to the events on 11 September 2001 by President Bush, as well as the creation of the National Economic Council by President Clinton. There are certainly other examples not listed here.

27. Ismay, "Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence," 242.

28. Eberstadt, *Unification of the War and Navy Departments*, 50.

29. Regenor to author, e-mail.

30. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 333; and Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, *National Security Policy Process*, appendix A, 61. The nomenclature for the NSC system has changed nearly as often as every president who has used the NSC. The president has historically used these documents to communicate his policies for national security and to authorize specific actions.

Chapter 5

Analysis, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

The committee is of the essence of the British way of life, which is pleasantly easygoing and inefficient. . . . If only the rest of the world could be persuaded to adopt the British committee system, what a pleasant place it would be in which to live.

—Lt Gen Sir Frederick E. Morgan
Original planner, Operation Overlord

To maintain its position in the world and advance its interests, the United States needs to maximize the impact of its diplomatic, military, and financial resources. That can only be done if the NSC system is permitted to perform as its creators originally intended.

—Zbigniew Brzezinski
President Carter's national security advisor

Though evolving from different nations across an ocean, the CID and the NSC are paternal relations. Blueprinting alone, however, did not guarantee that these organizations would turn out the same, let alone progress along the same evolutionary lines.

The CID became a first-of-its-kind experiment in the history of the world bringing the increasingly complex aspects of national security and mainland defense under the stewardship of Britain's highest political leaders. In spite of its novelty, the CID flourished at a time in history when the two greatest wars of our time were waged. By nearly all accounts including this one, the CID's organizational paradigm served to support its functions and operational ethos well, assessing its existence as successful.

Attempting to duplicate the British experiment, the United States created its own national security apparatus in the CID's image, assisting every president since 1947. The NSC system has

CONCLUSIONS

served as America's capstone government organization for policy coordination and advice. With respect to the NSC's ability to coordinate effective policy, over the past 60-plus years, the NSC has contributed to some of the greatest national security and foreign policy triumphs, as well as to some of its worst failures.

Similarities and differences between each organization reveal either positive correlations or negative ones, depending on the aspect compared:

- The CID and the NSC were both created because of post-war needs—Britain after the Boer Wars and America essentially after World War II.
- Each system was considered the primary national security policy coordinator and advisor to the head of government. The CID had the additional responsibility of defense planning.
- Each system was fully integrated into its respective government within seven years.
- Britain and the United States employ different executive governing systems that have colored how the CID and NSC systems would function. The British system of responsible government exercises a corporate system where both the cabinet and prime minister are jointly responsible for making decisions, while the United States employs a system of divided government where the president alone is responsible for executive decisions. Individual cabinet members in the United Kingdom have more gravitas than their counterparts in the United States (with the exceptions of perhaps defense and state, but that depends on the president). This difference arises from the British concept of responsible government which emphasizes the importance of faction and perhaps coalition. Parties in the United Kingdom create governments. Divided government in the United States means that parties:
 - elect presidents,
 - provide vehicles for various levels of federal politics, and
 - translate the various federal polities into the Congress and provide the bases for organizing the Congress.

Thus, the government differences between the United Kingdom and the United States are wide and deep. These differences are clearly evident in the respective conception and execution of their security policies. Because of these differences, professional CID and NSC bureaucrats view their role in the policy formulation process differently.

- Both systems depended upon trust: between the cabinet/prime minister and the CID secretary in the British system, and the president and the NSA in the US system.
- Executive authority was not granted to the CID or NSC staffs. The difference was that, when the CID assumed the war cabinet functions during World Wars I and II, it was granted executive authority, thereby increasing its influence and power.
- In order to function effectively, both organizations evolved and expanded well beyond their original intent. Specifically, the authority of the CID and the NSC evolved and expanded (and contracted) in degree and scope alternately emphasizing (and deemphasizing) policy coordinating authority, directive authority, and policy authority. For the CID, this arguably was a contributing factor in its demise.
- The chief executive of the respective governments chaired both organizations.
- Both organizations' original staff leaders—the secretary for the CID and the executive secretary for the NSC—were statutorily assigned necessarily vague duties and functions, permitting both maximum administrative flexibility. Since the executive secretary's imprecise duties migrated into the NSA position, the NSA's duties have never been statutorily established, making the position's official responsibilities and functions vague and unclear.
- The chief executive had complete freedom and flexibility to choose their security staff's leader.
- The CID and the NSC were both created to be nonpartisan advisory bodies, but over the course of time, the NSC has become politicized and partisan.

- When the size of the NSC staff or the pattern of its utilization has deviated greatly from the intent of the explicit provisions of the *National Security Act of 1947*, unfortunate foreign policy consequences have resulted. This did not happen with the CID.
- Both organizations' staffs had roughly the same combination of civilian and military personnel, but the NSC has evolved to be staffed predominantly by civilians.
- The CID wrote drafts of the war books and the NSC drafts of the presidential decision memoranda, but only the chief executives authorized execution usually with a signature to a final document. CID and NSC, both, were/are merely implements of the chief executive.

The findings of this study form the basis for the following recommendations with respect to improving the ongoing performance and function of the NSC system.

Recommendations

The British and American experiences have arguably both demonstrated that too large a staff or too many committees can detract from an organization's ability to serve the head of government effectively and efficiently.

Appropriately Size the National Security Council Staff

With regard to the CID, one might argue that the existence of 733 committees at the height of World War II was unnecessary and wasteful, but a reality nonetheless. Not only was the likelihood of multiple committees working on the same or similar policy issues a probability, the differing policy perspectives making their way to the top of the hierarchy were at times likely to work against one another. This could conceivably cause the time required to deliberate such diverse and wide-ranging positions to exceed the time limits with which a decision was needed. Similar to the large committee presence in the CID was the expansion of the NSC system under presidents Eisenhower and Nixon. As discussed in the study, this had a negative impact on the NSC's performance of its responsibilities.

In addition, one cannot confuse the idea of a smaller body necessarily being better at its duties. President Kennedy's reduction of the NSC staff did not necessarily result in the Bay of Pigs invasion failure or the heightened intensity of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Instead, President Kennedy disregarded much of the body's advice in favor of counsel from associations personally close to himself and outside the NSC structure.

Next, there is a tendency for individuals in large groups to feel creatively stifled, which could limit the best thinking, perspectives, and critical analysis from vertically working up through the organization's highest reaches. In this regard, the *Report of the President's Special Review Board* advocated for a small NSC staff, noting, "A large number of staff action officers . . . enhances the possibilities for poorly supervised and monitored activities by individual staff members."¹ The evidence in this study of the modern NSC system supports the board's 21-year old finding. The board, however, did caution that putting a "legislative restriction" on the size of the staff *would* restrict the flexibility of future presidents' unforeseen requirements. This, of course, is conjecture and not fully supportable by the evidence brought to light in this study. This study suggests that certain checks, balances, and other legislative restrictions could be put into place regulating the staff size without impeding the president's ability or prerogative to make policy decisions.

The establishment of both the CID and NSC represented bold and important additions to existing government structure, reflecting the respective governments' willingness to implement change through lessons learned. Today, however, there is a smaller appetite to make such *sweeping* change in either the British or American governments even though the shift in the security environment from state to nonstate actors is at least as significant as the challenges faced by governments in the twentieth century.

Finally, the testimony of the very first NSA, Robert Cutler, cautioned against the idea of too large a staff, noting that it "would drift into becoming itself a policy maker." Furthermore, he went on to state, "the larger the staff, in connection with policy making, the more work it makes for itself and the less work it does for the chief."² In this light, Zbigniew Brzezinski and other national security experts agree, going even further

CONCLUSIONS

by stating that from 30 to 50 professionals is a good number of staffers for the NSC.³ This statement is correspondingly supported by the CID experience. The CID was comprised of core members numbering only 15 to 20 at any given time—striking a good balance between too many and too few.⁴

Whatever the proper size the staff should be to function effectively, consideration should be given to harnessing information technologies that support and do not detract from the NSC's work. Similar to the effort in the intelligence community to create fusion centers, the idea of bringing standardized, cross domain, and collaborative information environment tools and concepts into the policy-coordinating realm may enhance and increase governmental efficiency. Commercial companies specializing in information technologies have matured some of the collaborative tools that could easily be transitioned for large-scale government use.

The bottom line is that the number of the people on the staff should be appropriately sized as it relates to the tasks at hand, which can change over time given the state of the world, but should remain as diminutive as practical to accomplish its objectives.

Continue to Stress the Importance of Strategic Planning

One of the hallmarks of the CID's success was its ability to make advanced, long-range preparations—both defensively and offensively (eventually). Noteworthy, too, is the fact that a great deal of forethought and strategic planning is occurring at the highest levels of the US government. This occurs both *overtly*, through publicly accessible unclassified planning documents and other strategic documents such as the *National Security Strategy*, and *covertly*, via similarly classified strategic planning documents.

Brzezinski stressed the importance and responsibility of national security strategic planning. He observed that neither the departments of state nor defense are individually staffed to plan on a comprehensive stand-alone basis because they are staffed with necessarily specialized and trained diplomats and military thinkers, respectively. Brzezinski also suggested re-making and using the Eisenhower-era NSC Planning Board as

a possible solution to the lack of a useful planning arm—a suggestion supported by the evidence in this study.⁵ According to scholar and former NSC senior staffer Meghan O’Sullivan, “inherent disconnects [exist] in planning time horizons between [government departments and] agencies and speculating whether the NSC is well positioned to harmonize them” is a challenging endeavor.⁶ In this respect, one might argue that the NSC is the institution least able to think and long-range plan beyond the presidential administration but should not be restrained by such arbitrary restrictions, nonetheless.

Another example can be found in the lack of a coherent US policy toward Turkey in the mid-1990s. According to Dr. John White, deputy secretary of defense from 1995 to 1997, the NSC DEPC would often discuss the need for developing and coordinating a long-term strategy for US engagement with Turkey, yet none was ever actually created.⁷ At the time, Turkey’s relationship with the US had grown into one of great significance on the heels of the Persian Gulf War involving the use of Incirlik Air Base to prosecute operations Provide Comfort and Northern Watch. One would think that because of the importance of this continued strategic relationship that a thoroughly coordinated policy was crafted and put into use but that was simply not the case.

Lastly, the US Commission on National Security/21st Century and groups like it have referred to the dearth of a strategic planning function with regard to the NSC system. They have concluded that “no overarching strategic framework guides US national security policymaking,” and implored the president to “personally guide a top-down strategic planning process and delegate authority to the National Security Advisor to coordinate that process.”⁸ Unfortunately, shorter-term planning and “inbox management,” coupled with policy “implementation coordination and oversight” override the precedence long-range planning should take.⁹

Rethink the Longstanding Tradition of Extending Executive Privilege to the Workings of the National Security Council

Although NSA staff members customarily have not formally appeared before Congress, perhaps they should. In the British experience, the CID was responsible to the cabinet and the

CONCLUSIONS

prime minister, yet still consistently demonstrated remarkable effectiveness. Though the author is not advocating that the United States consider adopting the British system of government, the idea of some official kind of dialogue or feedback loop with Congress is conditionally merited, if for no other reason than to at least inform Congress of NSC staff policy positions under consideration.¹⁰ The US government system is one of checks and balances and no part of it should be fully veiled from Congress. Considering the fact that the last comprehensive review of the NSC system and NSA took place during the investigation producing the *Report of the President's Special Review Board* in 1987, over 21 years have passed and the strategic contextual environment has changed drastically.¹¹ Moreover, the stakes for failure are very high as has been illustrated in this study.

Critics of this recommendation will find it problematic, though, particularly those who work in the NSC and the president's administration. Foremost is the possible loss of trust between the president and his personal NSA. Inviting congressional inquiry and scrutiny into the presidential policy-making realm could have the opposite effect it was trying to achieve by infringing on that trust relationship. Additionally, congressional insight into the specific activities of the NSC has the potential for creating an adversarial relationship between Congress and the chief executive to the extent that Congress may become overly critical of the presidential prerogative to make policy, and thus, defeat the purpose of information sharing by the president. According to Dr. Megan O'Sullivan, "the W[hite] H[ouse] and NSC staff do have lots of relationships with Congress. [NSA] Hadley, [former US Ambassador to the United Nations John] Bolton, and even members of the NSC regularly have conversations with [Capitol] Hill on important issues. There are regular consultations and . . . these are important."¹² This is encouraging but what is not clear, however, is if these conversations are useful in informing the Congress of what they need to know, and more importantly, if they are more than a one-way dialogue from the NSC to Congress. If these informal relationships, engagements, and their dialogue do not have an effect or ability to reach the highest levels of the NSC, is the US government fully serving the American people?

Consider Making the National Security Advisor a Nonpartisan Advisor and Policy Coordinator

The nonpartisan aspects of the CID's staff and secretary throughout its entire existence were of great benefit to its administration and function. To the extent possible, the evidence of this study is sufficiently suggestive that the NSC staff, and particularly the NSA, should remain as objective and bias free as possible when coordinating policy on behalf of the cabinet departments and agencies, and when subsequently advising the president. Conduct of a partisan nature by the NSC leadership in the past has led to damaging consequences. A downside to this recommendation is that a nonpartisan NSA may not gain the presidential trust necessary to advise the chief executive fully and effectively.

This recommendation, understandably, will not be received well by any presidential administration because it necessarily detracts from the chief executive's ability to forge his own national security policy free from outside interference. Of course, the author well understands this very important aspect of American national security policy making and constitutional design and does not fully subscribe to making the NSA nonpartisan, however, consider the following.

If not a nonpartisan NSA, consideration for nonpartisan key NSC staff personnel should be entertained. What does this mean? Perhaps a career track for professional NSC staff members should be created and developed similar to the career track for Department of State Foreign Service officers.¹³ A cadre of professional national security staffers would bring necessary continuity to the policy making and coordinating function of the executive branch that is lacking in the today's NSC system. With the potential changeover of administrations every four years, national security institutional knowledge is lost when key personnel leave the NSC. Important considerations germane to the recommendation include defining exactly what nonpartisan means. Does it mean the person(s) cannot be a registered party member? On the other hand, are military personnel perhaps better at the job because of their apolitical nature when wearing the uniform? The overriding issue with a

CONCLUSIONS

nonpartisan NSA is trust and having a close confidant is probably the most important consideration.

Conduct an Independent Investigation

This is a catchall recommendation not specifically connected to the findings of this comparative study, but a vital one nonetheless. The general idea is to commission a nonpartisan and independent government accountability office-like entity to study and report to Congress on the aforementioned proposals. As a starting point for their investigation, they may find that useful work already exists to this extent. Additionally, the observations and studies by the nonpartisan, nonprofit Project for National Security Reform, the US Commission on National Security/21st Century, and a host of other similarly focused efforts could benefit the national security system greatly.¹⁴ These two efforts have already produced comprehensive studies, articles, and literature reviews in an attempt to inform persons of influence within the government that share a penchant for improving the US national security apparatus of the improvements that are possible and necessary.¹⁵ There would also be support for such efforts from the executive branch as the current Bush administration has already publicized the importance of initiatives in the president's 2006 *National Security Strategy*.¹⁶

The bottom line of this recommendation is that some moderate form of accountability should be employed with respect to this most important of all government policy coordinating institutions—the NSC—in the implementation and execution of its policies and decisions. The policy positions and engagement of the United States with the rest of the world, as well as its standing as the world's current superpower, demands the best from its institutions, including an accountable, policy-making government body in which a diversity of perspectives are considered and debated. This is not to communicate that the author believes that either an investigation or its recommendations should be listened to or followed by the president, but merely that a wider net should be cast for which a greater number of views are heard, and perhaps advanced. One possible way to frame larger involvement and bring a certain level of accountability to NSC processes is to consider repealing the provision in the Inspector

General Act of 1978 that excludes the Executive Office of the President from the provisions of this act, thereby infusing necessary accountability into the policy-making process.¹⁷

Implications

In order for any of these recommendations to be seriously considered, the executive branch and Executive Office of the President must be willing to have their processes more closely studied and scrutinized than ever before. It also requires them to have a receptive and open mindset to change for the sake of improving an already well-functioning national-security apparatus. This way of thinking is also one that believes in making improvements or changes only for the good of the nation. The US Congress can play a key role in these matters.

Ultimately, the national security system and all of the processes therein belong to the president. The exceptional threats and challenges of this century clearly require the best the United States has to offer. Past breakdowns by the NSC system have led to domestic and international failures with significant consequences, demonstrating where it has fallen short of the congressional intent of the *National Security Act of 1947*.

On behalf of America, the president alone approves policy actions and decides the courses of action the nation will take. Any attempts to change the law and statutes of the 60-year-old NSC system must consider its staying power, endurance, and continued existence in contrast with the CID's shorter 35-year existence. Yet just because the system has endured for so long does not mean it should not entertain the potential and possibility to improve. Change comes hard, but is an inevitable part of the human experience.

In the end, only by the close comparison between the CID and its prototyped NSC can one appreciate the similarities and differences that existed between them. By bringing to light and subsequently analyzing their similarities and differences, the CID and NSC systems served to illustrate how the effective operation of organizations, standing in resemblance and contrast to one other, can later serve as useful discussion points of departure. Given that this study was completed in a presidential election year, the recommendations are suitably appro-

CONCLUSIONS

priate to inform and educate a new presidential administration . . . and beyond.

Notes

1. Tower, Muskie, and Scowcroft, *Report of the President's Special Review Board*, V-3 to V-4.
2. Cutler, "Development of the National Security Council," 457-58.
3. Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 97; and Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 361. In these, Brzezinski cogently explains the reasons for his recommendations.
4. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 362-63.
5. Brzezinski, "NSC's Midlife Crisis," 96.
6. O'Sullivan to the author, e-mail.
7. Dr. John White, former deputy secretary of defense, interview by the author, 5 April 2008. Dr. White noted to me that this was just one example of many he was witness to at his level.
8. US Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Road Map for National Security*, 64. See also Uchida, *Reforming the Interagency Process*, 57.
9. Andivahis et al., *Project on National Security Reform*, F-6.
10. The interaction with Congress could be provisioned such that no decisions would be made in contravention to the NSC staff's developing positions so that the president's ability to fully deliberate and approve coordinated NSC staff policy is unfettered, unconstrained, and does not dilute the effectiveness and compromise privilege the president currently enjoys with his national security advisor as well as the White House chief of staff. Understandably, this may be harder to legislate in practice as the two principles are at odds with one another. Some very informal interactions with Congress do take place, but apparently on a limited scale, and perhaps inconsistently as noted by NSC deputy executive secretary Lt Col James Regenor: "outreach [is accomplished] as needed whether it is before we move forward on an issue or after. The NSA [national security advisor] meets with members [of Congress]. Members [of Congress] will also provide us updates on pending [presidential trip] leg[s] or upon return from a trip or a meeting with a head of state. This is very informal and crosses both parties." Regner to author, e-mail.
11. One last note on congressional interactions—as long as the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government are not breached, some form of interaction could help build congressional support for presidential positions and foster a trust that appears to be missing in the US government. As well, meeting with the Congress in some capacity might invest them more into the national security process and build trust and confidence between the executive and legislative branches.
12. O'Sullivan to author, e-mail.
13. There are lower-level staffers serving in the NSC that continue in their capacities from administration to administration, but the author is talking about more influential, higher-level officials serving continuously.

14. See Andivalis, et al., *Project on National Security Reform*. The *Project for National Security Reform*'s mission is to "assist national leadership in improving the US government's ability to effectively provide for the nation's security in the 21st century." Likewise, the US Commission on National Security/21st Century was "initiated over two years ago out of a conviction that the entire range of US national security policies and processes required examination in light of new circumstances that lie ahead."

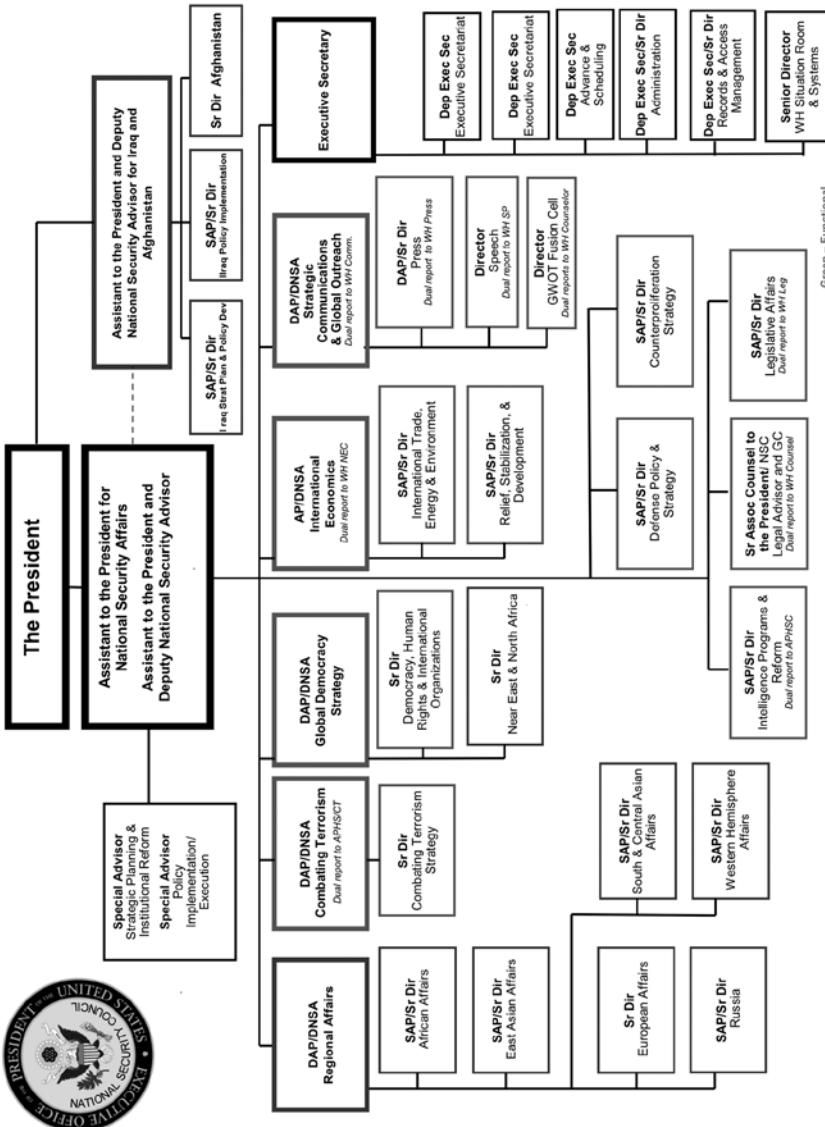
15. For example, see US Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Road Map for National Security*.

16. The Whitehouse, *National Security Strategy*, 1. The applicable overarching statement reads: "Transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century."

17. *Inspector General Act of 1978*, Sec. 8G (a) (1) (C). Making the NSC System (not the entire Executive Office of the President) subject to certain provisions of the *Inspector General Act* might have the effect of providing independent accountability to NSC processes without impinging on its ability to function properly.

Appendix A

National Security Council Structure



March 3, 2008

Adapted from PowerPoint slide provided by Col James A. Regenor, deputy executive secretary, National Security Council, to author, e-mail, 17 October 2008.

Appendix B

Policy Coordination Committees

Provided by Col James A. Regenor, deputy executive secretary, National Security Council, to author, e-mail, 18 March 2008.

Current regional PCCs include (the department responsible for chairing the committee is in parentheses):

- Europe and Eurasia (State)
- Western Hemisphere (State and NSC co-chair)
- Mexico/Central America Regional Strategy (State and NSC co-chair)
- East Asia (State)
- South and Central Asia (State)
- Iran (State and NSC co-chair)
- Syria-Lebanon (State and NSC co-chair)
- Africa (State and NSC co-chair)
- Russia (State and NSC co-chair)
- Iraq (NSC)
- Afghanistan (State and NSC co-chair)

Functional PCCs include:

- Arms Control (NSC)
- Biodefense (NSC and HSC)
- Combating Terrorism Information Strategy (NSC)
- Contingency Planning/Crisis Response Group (NSC)
- Counter-terrorism Security Group (NSC and HSC)
- Defense Strategy, Force Structure, and Planning Department of Defense)

APPENDIX B

- Democracy, Human Rights, and International Operations (NSC)
- Detainees (NSC)
- Global Environment (NSC and National Economic Council co-chair)
- HIV-AIDS and Infectious Diseases (State and NSC)
- Information Sharing (NSC and HSC)
- Intelligence and Counterintelligence (NSC)
- Interdiction (NSC)
- International Development and Humanitarian Assistance (State and NSC co-chair)
- International Drug Control Policy (NSC and Office of National Drug Control Policy)
- International Finance (Treasury)
- International Organized Crime (NSC)
- Maritime Security (NSC and HSC)
- Proliferation Strategy, Counterproliferation, and Homeland Defense (NSC)
- Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations (State and NSC)
- Records Access and Information Security (NSC)
- Space (NSC)
- Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications (State)
- Transnational Economic Issues (NSC)
- Weapons of Mass Destruction-Terrorism (NSC)
- Avian and Pandemic Influenza (NSC and HSC)
- Communication Systems and Cybersecurity (NSC and HSC)

Appendix C

President's Special Review Board National Security Advisor Functions

The *Report of the President's Special Review Board* mentioned the functions that NSAs had come to perform. These functions were described as appearing “essential to the effective discharge of the President's responsibilities in national security affairs” and serve as an excellent guide for all NSAs to follow in the present day.* The NSA:

- is an “honest broker” for the NSC process, assuring that issues are clearly presented to the president; that all reasonable options, together with an analysis of their disadvantages and risks, are brought to the president's attention; and that the views of the president's other principal advisors are accurately conveyed.
- advises from the president's vantage point, without institutional responsibilities and biases. Unlike the secretaries of state or defense, who have substantial organizations for which they are responsible, the president is the NSA's only constituency.
- monitors the actions taken by the executive departments in implementing the president's national security policies, asking whether actions are consistent with presidential decisions and whether, over time, the underlying policies continue to serve US interests.
- has a special role in crises management. This has resulted from the need for prompt and coordinated action under presidential control, often with secrecy being essential.
- reaches out for new ideas and initiatives that will give substance to broad presidential objectives for national security.
- keeps the president informed about international developments and developments in the Congress and the executive branch that affect the president's policies and priorities.

*Tower and Scowcroft, *Report of the President's Special Review Board*, II-3.

Abbreviations

CDC	Colonial Defence Committee
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
DCOM	Defense Committee
DEPC	Deputies Committee
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
HSC	Homeland Security Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSA	National Security Advisor
NSC	National Security Council
OCB	Operations Coordination Board
PC	Principals Committee
PCC	Policy Coordination Committee
SANACC	State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee
SIG	Senior Interdepartmental Group
SWNCC	State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee

Bibliography

Andivahis, L., M. Casey, Jr., B. Mallory, M. A. Shabat, R. Tang, and A. Vaccaro. *Project on National Security Reform, Literature Review (Draft)*. Working Group on Structure, Project on National Security Reform, 2007. http://www.pnsr.org/data/images/organizational_structure_literature_review.pdf.

Best, R. A. *National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment*. New York: Novinka Books, 2001.

Bolt, P. J., D. V. Coletta, and C. G. Shackleford. *American Defense Policy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Bracken, P. "Managing to Fail: Why Strategy is Disjointed." *American Interest* 3, no. 1, (Fall 2007): 71–80.

Brzezinski, Z. "NSC's Midlife Crisis." *Foreign Policy*, no. 69 (Winter 1987): 80–99.

Bumiller, E. *Condoleezza Rice: An American Life: A Biography*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Burke, J. P. "Contemporary Presidency: Condoleezza Rice as NSC Advisor: A Case Study of the Honest Broker Role." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (September 2005): 554–75.

Bush, G. H. W., and B. Scowcroft. *A World Transformed*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998.

Carter, A. B., and J. P. White. *Keeping the Edge: Managing Defense for the Future*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.

Carter, J. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977*, Book I, 20 January to 24 June 1977. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office (GPO), 1977.

Catterall, P. "How Imperial was the Committee of Imperial Defence?" Political Studies Association, 1998. <http://www.psa.ac.uk/publications/psd/1998/catterall.htm>.

Clifford, C. "Workings of the National Security System: Past, Present, and Future—An Interview with Philip Geyelin." *SAIS Review* 8, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 1988): 19–20.

Cline, R. S. *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*. Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1951.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Corwin, E. S., R. W. Bland, T. T. Hindson, and J. W. Peltason. *The President: Office and Powers, 1787–1984: History and Analysis of Practice and Opinion*. New York: New York University Press, 1984.

Cutler, R. “Development of the National Security Council.” *Foreign Affairs* 34, no. 3 (April 1956): 441–58.

Dahl, R. A. “Science of Public Administration: Three Problems.” *Public Administration Review* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1947): 1–11.

Destler, I. M. “National Security Advice to U.S. Presidents: Some Lessons from Thirty Years.” *World Politics* 29, no. 2 (January 1977): 143–76.

Dobbins, J. “Who Lost Iraq?” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 5 (Fall 2007): 61–74.

d’Ombrain, N. *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902–1914*. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Dorwart, J. M. *Eberstadt and Forrestal: A National Security Partnership, 1909–1949*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1991.

Eberstadt, F. *Unification of the War and Navy Departments and Postwar Organization for National Security: Report to James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy*. US Senate, Committee on Naval Affairs, 79th Cong., 1st sess., “Eberstadt Report.” Washington, DC: GPO, 1945.

Gelb, L. H. “Why Not the State Department?” *Washington Quarterly Special Supplement* (Autumn 1980): 26.

Gerstein, D. M. *Securing America’s Future: National Strategy in the Information Age*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005.

Gertz, B. *Betrayal: How the Clinton Administration Undermined American Security*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Girard, P. R. *Clinton in Haiti: The 1994 U.S. Invasion of Haiti*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Gordon, M. R., and B. E. Trainor. *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2006.

Greenstein, F. I., and R. H. Immerman. “Effective National Security Advising: Recovering the Eisenhower Legacy.” *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 335–45.

Hammond, P. W. "National Security Council as a Device for Interdepartmental Coordination: An Interpretation and Appraisal." *American Political Science Review* 54, no. 4 (December 1960): 899–910.

Hammond, P. Y. *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Hankey, M. P. A. "Editorial." *Army Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (July 1927): 254.

———. *Diplomacy by Conference: Studies in Public Affairs, 1920–1946*. London: E. Benn, Ltd., 1946.

———. *Supreme Command, 1914–1918*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1961.

Harris, J. F. "Berger's Caution has Shaped Role of U.S. in War." *Washington Post*, 16 May 1999.

Hinckley, R. H. "National Security in the Information Age." *Washington Quarterly* (Spring 1986): 25–39.

Huggins, Lt Col P., professor of comparative military studies, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. To the author. E-mail, 8 April 2008.

Inderfurth, K., and L. K. Johnson. *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Inspector General Act of 1978. Public Law 95-452. 1978. http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title5a/5a_2_.html.

Ismay, L. H. L. "Machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence." *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 84, no. 534 (May 1939): 241.

Johnson, F. A. "British Committee of Imperial Defence: Prototype of U.S. Security Organization." *Journal of Politics* 23, no. 2 (May 1961): 231–61.

———. *Defence by Committee: British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885–1959*. London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. *History of the Joint Staff*. Department of Defense. http://www.jcs.mil/cjs_history.html (accessed 17 March 2008).

Jordan, H. D. "Foreign Government and Politics: The British Cabinet and the Ministry of Defense." *American Political Science Review* 43, no. 1 (February 1949): 73–82.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kessler, R. *A Matter of Character: Inside the White House of George W. Bush*. New York: Sentinel, 2004.

Lake, A. *6 Nightmares: Real Threats in a Dangerous World and How America Can Meet Them*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2000.

Lord, C. "NSC Reform for the Post-Cold War Era." *Orbis* (Summer 2000): 433-50.

———. *Presidency and the Management of National Security*. New York: Free Press, 1988.

Lute, D. E. *Improving National Capacity to Respond to Complex Emergencies: The U.S. Experience*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1998.

Madison, J. "Federalist No. 51: The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments." *Independent Journal*, 6 February 1788. <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa51.htm>.

Murdock, C. A., M. A. Flournoy, K. M. Campbell, P. A. Chao, J. Smith, A. A. Witkowsky, and C. E. Wormuth. *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: Phase II Report: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005. http://www.csis.org/component?option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,1849/type,1/.

National Security Act of 1947, US Code, vol. 50, 401 (1947).

Pfiffner, J. P. "Did President Bush Mislead the Country in his Arguments for War with Iraq?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (March 2004): 25-46.

Presidential Directive/NSC-2. "SUBJECT: The National Security Council System," 20 January 1977. <http://www.drworley.org/NSPcommon/NSPDs/PD-1977-Carter-NSC-2.doc>.

Project on National Security Reform. Center for the Study of the Presidency. <http://www.pnsr.org/> (accessed 17 March 2008).

Public Broadcasting Service. "Frontline Interviews Elizabeth Bumiller." *Bush's War*. Public Broadcasting Service, 17 January 2008. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/bushswar/interviews/bumiller.html> (accessed 20 April 2008).

Reagan, R. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, Book 2, 3 July to 31 December 1982. Washington, DC: GPO, 1983.

“Records of the National Security Council [NSC] (Record Group 273), 1947–1969.” *Guide to Federal Records*. National Archives. <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/273.html#273.6>.

Roskill, S. W. *Hankey: Man of Secrets*. London: Collins, 1970.

Ross, D. *Statecraft: And How to Restore America’s Standing in the World*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007.

Rothkopf, D. J. *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power*. New York: Public Affairs Books, 2005.

Runzi, C. O. “Transforming the National Security Council: Inter-agency Authority, Organization, Doctrine.” Research paper, US Army War College, 27 February 2007.

Sander, A. D. “Truman and the National Security Council, 1945–1947.” *Journal of American History* 59, no. 2 (September 1972): 369–88.

Schake, K., and B. Berkowitz. “National Security: A Better Approach.” *Hoover Digest* 4, 2005. <http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/2913101.html>.

Schlesinger, A. M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.

Souers, S. W. “Policy Formulation for National Security.” *American Political Science Review* 43, no. 3 (June 1949): 534–43.

“Sir Maurice Hankey and the Origins of the Cabinet Office.” Source UK.net, 1 November 1999. http://www.sourceuk.net/article/0/562/sir_maurice_hankey_and_the_origins_of_the_cabinet_office.html.

Stevens, P. S. “National Security Council: Past and Prologue.” *Strategic Review* 17, no. 1 (1989): 56–59.

Stevenson, C. A. “Underlying Assumptions of the National Security Act of 1947.” *Joint Force Quarterly* 48, (1st Quarter 2008): 129–33.

Stuart, D. T., ed. *Organizing for National Security*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2000. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/299.pdf>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Thayer, F. C. "Presidential Policy Processes and New Administration: A Search for Revised Paradigms." *Public Administration Review* 31, no. 5 (September/October 1971): 552-61.

Tower, J., E. Muskie, and B. Scowcroft. *Report of the President's Special Review Board*. Washington, DC: GPO, 26 February 1987.

———. "Organizing for National Security." In *American Defense Policy*, edited by P. Hays, B. Vallance, and A. Van Tassel, 185-88. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997.

US Bureau of the Budget. *United States at War: Development and Administration of the War Program by the Federal Government*. Washington, DC: GPO, 1946.

US Commission on National Security/21st Century. *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change*. Washington, DC: GPO, 2001.

"US Commission on National Security/21st Century: Hart-Rudman Commission." *Cyber Cemetery*. University of North Texas Libraries. <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/nssg/Reports/reports.htm> (accessed 17 March 2008).

US Senate. 80th Cong. 1st sess., Senate Report 239, "National Security Act of 1947."

Uchida, T. T. *Reforming the Interagency Process*. Maxwell AFB, AL: Center for Aerospace Doctrine Research and Education, 2005. https://www.afresearch.org/skins/rims/q_mod_be0e99f3-fc56-4ccb-8dfe-670c0822a153/q_act_downloadpaper/q_obj_eefeb460-bf93-43b9-9455-38c88aa185cb/display.aspx?rs=enginespage.

Weisberg, J. *Bush Tragedy*. New York: Random House, 2008.

The Whitehouse. *History of the National Security Council, 1947-1997*. The Whitehouse. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/history.html> (accessed 16 March 2008).

———. *National Security Strategy of the United States*. The Whitehouse, 16 March 2006. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>.

Whittaker, A. G., F. C. Smith, and E. McKune. *National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System*. Washington, DC: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, 2007.

Woodward, B. *Bush at War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

———. *Plan of Attack*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

———. *State of Denial*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

Wyden, P. *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979.

Yost, C. W. "Instruments of American Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 50, no. 1 (October 1971): 59.

Zegart, A. B. *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999.

The Machinery of Government Needs a Tune-up

Lessons for the US National Security Council
from the British Committee of Imperial Defence

Air University Press Team

Editor

James S. Howard

Copy Editor

Sandi Davis

Cover Art and Book Design

Steven C. Garst

Illustrations

Daniel Armstrong

Composition and

Prepress Production

Vivian O'Neal

Quality Review

Mary J. Moore

Print Preparation

Diane Clark

Distribution

Wendell Wiggins